

LEADERS OF MEN.

TOLSTOY



A. C. TURBERVILLE

1910.  
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COUNT LEO TOLSTOY.

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# LEO TOLSTOY

BY

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"TYPES OF THE SAINTLY LIFE," AND "STEPS TOWARDS  
CHRISTIAN UNITY."

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## PREFACE.

THE present volume has grown beyond the limits originally proposed for it. My idea had been to present a sketch of Leo Tolstoy's life, together with such a brief introduction to his works as might interest and help working-men, too alert to be indifferent to one of the great leaders of thought, but too busy to attempt an exhaustive study of one of the most prolific writers of our age. The publication of the first volume of Birukov's *Life*, however, afforded an opportunity of presenting a somewhat fuller account of the early days of this man of mighty genius and spiritual force than has hitherto been available. On the other hand, while the work was in progress, I found it to be impossible to observe the desired limits, without neglecting subjects vital to a right understanding of Tolstoy.

My actual endeavour has been to tell the story, with some degree of fullness, down to the period of the great spiritual change which vitally affected his career and mission. In doing this I have felt, what I believe that all sympathetic students of Tolstoy must have felt, that the inner history of his spirit, as revealed in the autobiographical portions of his *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*, of *Anna Karenina*, and of *War and Peace*, were more essential than such records of his external life as were available. I have carefully compared the semi-biographical portions of these novels with

## Preface.

authentic sources of information regarding Tolstoy's early life.

For the rest, this work aims at being expository rather than critical. I have taken as little for granted as possible, for observation and special inquiry have satisfied me that even reading people in England rarely attempt more than one or two of the stories together with perhaps a single didactic work, such as *My Religion*. I, of course, except professed Tolstoyans. In endeavouring to give some idea of the prodigal affluence of this mighty source of spiritual force and inspiration, my hope is that many readers may be incited to seek for still further knowledge from the fountain source itself.

It has unfortunately happened, but not unnaturally that many previous endeavours to familiarise English readers with the teaching of Tolstoy have been made by professed Tolstoyans, and in some cases these works have emanated from extremists who have exasperated their master's most baffling paradoxes, and have, by their harsh and exaggerated representations, given a false impression of Tolstoy, who, however severe in regard to his own striving after the ideal life, is one of the most tolerant and reasonable of moralists in his dealings with others. I must refer my readers to the following pages for a justification of this statement. This man is so much more human, and so much greater than the sects that would monopolise him and sectarianise his teaching would have us think. I rise from these fresh studies of the self-revelations of Tolstoy, more than ever persuaded that he has a message to Humanity. For his negations and his increasing antipathy to the Russian Church, I personally have nothing but

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regret. It is as true of him as of lesser men, that he is right in what he affirms, but wrong in what he denies. I trust, then, that this book often may be of help to some who have been repelled, as I myself have been, by his unhappy attitude towards all organised forms of Christianity.

I am eager to help them, that they may share with me the inspirations of his truly Christian teaching, for I believe that Tolstoy has laid firmer grasp on the ethical principles of the Gospel than any other living man. He has striven with heroic courage and patience not only to preach the doctrine but to live the life, in the spirit of Amiel's great simple saying, "Be that which you would make others."

The appearance of this fresh attempt to portray the character and to re-echo the message of this gigantic personality is surely not inopportune, for on 28th August, of the present year, Count Leo Tolstoy will celebrate his eightieth birthday. What more can be said, or more fittingly, than is said in the "Appeal" that is now being circulated? "There is something deeply expressive in this beautiful and bright old age, in this union of spiritual and physical vigour. For a long time the entire world has listened with rapt attention to the out-pourings of his great conscience. More than any other, Tolstoy has embodied in his works the central idea of one single humanity, and has endeavoured to solve the ever-present, deep, eternal problems." It is indeed a joy to us who have lived in the light of his God-conscious life, with its self-revelations of unprecedented truth, to share in celebrating a jubilee "rare in the history of literature."

It remains for me to make some acknowledgment



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of works that I have consulted with profit. It is a pleasure to express my delight in the wonderful edition of *Count Tolstoy's Complete Works*, edited by Leo Wiener, published by J. Dent & Co. Beside the *Life* (vol. 1.), by Birukov, to which reference has already been made, and the *Recollections of Tolstoy*, by C. A. Bers, I have been deeply indebted to Mr. Aylmer Maude not only for *Tolstoy and his Problems*, but more especially for his later book, *A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors*. Sir D. M. Wallace's *Russia*, and Professor W. R. Morfill's *Russia*, in the *Story of the Nations* series, I have, of course, found invaluable. Among critical works, I should make special mention of *The Life and Teaching of Tolstoy*, by G. H. Perris, and *Tolstoi as Man and Artist*, by D. Merejkowski. It is also a pleasure to refer to a short study by the Rev. J. E. Lucas, entitled *Leo Nicolaievitch Tolstoy*, which appears to me to be a model of wise condensation and of lucid exposition.

I could wish that the readers of this book might share with me in the heart-searching and deeply-moving experiences which have accompanied long hours spent with Leo Tolstoy, one of the few men who give you the impression of being consciously to themselves in harmony with the truth of things.

ARTHUR C. TURBERVILLE.

10th March, 1908.

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# T O L S T O Y.

## INTRODUCTION.

MUCH has been done of late years to make Tolstoy's works accessible to English readers, but owing to their remarkable extent and variety, and to the inherent difficulty of rendering Russian works into good English, comparatively few even of the leisured classes have been at the pains to become acquainted with them, or have succeeded in grasping the meaning of his message to our age. Yet by his friends and disciples he is regarded as the "greatest of living men;" and speaking of the conflict of opinion to which his work has given rise, one of his most accomplished students and most discriminating critics, Leo Wiener, says: "It is obvious that only a nature of gigantic proportions could have given rise to such varied valuations."

My object in this volume is rather expository than critical. My endeavour is to set forth the personality and life-work of Leo Tolstoy, and in

doing this nothing shall be taken for granted. Let me begin by taking my readers into my confidence. Will you let me adopt the same kind of direct and simple speech as I should use were a number of working-men, for whom this work is specially intended, gathered round me—gathered round me for friendly interrogation regarding this Russian prophet, who, by virtue of his vitality, his remarkable personality and distinctive teaching, has leapt the barriers of his nationality, and has spoken to the whole western world?

I commence my task, then, by accentuating some clear, strong reasons why we all, and especially why working-men who want to get at the root of our social problems, to realise the innermost causes of social distress, and who, taking life seriously themselves, earnestly wish to do something in their lives to make the world a little brighter and better for their existence, should try to understand Tolstoy's message.

In the first place, we cannot but admire the man who gives his life as a pledge of the truth he teaches. Nothing impresses the world so much as clear conviction and downright sincerity. Tolstoy has lived the life as well as taught the doctrine. I admit that this has been strenuously and even bitterly denied, and I shall have occasion later on

to discuss the question of Tolstoy's good faith. At present I content myself with saying that Tolstoy's convictions compelled him to make what most men would regard as great sacrifices, that he has thrown in his lot with the common people, standing almost entirely aloof from the society into which he was born. He prefers the life of a peasant, and for twenty years past has not only taught the simple life but lived it. Not only does he wear the peasant's garb, but he has done his share of the hard manual work of the peasantry; he has steadfastly refused to be waited on, or to let others do menial work for him. He has taken his part in the hard toil by which the fields are cultivated, the house kept clean, and the daily meals prepared. There are lives that tell their own story. His is such a life—a book that needs no translation. The chief difficulty we all experience to-day with the religion of Jesus Christ is that so few believe it enough to make the personal sacrifices that it demands. Men say they believe, but very plainly they do not believe. Theirs is the insight that “never has borne fruit in deeds.” In the case of Tolstoy we have dealings with a man who embodies the truth he teaches. “Be,” said Amiel, “that which you would make others.” I believe that you will be helped by a study of Leo Tolstoy because of this. He answers to the three require-

ments of Matthew Arnold. He is one who "sees clear, feels deep, bears fruit well."

A second obvious reason why the common people, the descendants of those who in Galilee heard the Divine Master "gladly," should study the life-work of Tolstoy, is that he so profoundly values the man of toil. Indeed, he despises all who do not work, and work with the hand as well as with the brain. He was born to rank and affluence and ease, but he refuses to exempt himself from the law which, with the Russian peasant teacher Bondarev, he believes to be a universal law, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." In this, as in many other respects, Ruskin approximated to the teaching of Tolstoy. In letter 67 of *Fors Clavigera*, he wrote:—"It is physically impossible that true religious knowledge, or pure morality, should exist among any classes of a nation who do not work with their hands for their bread." Working-men, he has made your problems his problems, your cares his cares. For a time, indeed, he tried to ease his conscience and his heart by what is called "charity," by sharing a portion of his superfluous wealth with his poorer neighbours, but he found that he could do no good, but only harm that way. It shamed him to play my Lord Bountiful among his poor neighbours. He found that he could never be that which he longed to be



and knew he ought to be—a brother by their side while he was acting the part of a little god in their midst, dispensing wealth which he had not earned, and which he discovered to be a curse to him who possessed it and to the receiver alike. He came at last to the conclusion that in the meantime the only way in which he could really help the oppressed poor man was by “getting off his back.” He came to see clearly that in Russia the peasant was kept in perpetual indigence and misery, and in practical servitude, through the incidence of crushing taxation, levied to provide all manner of things which the peasant did not want, and which were, in fact, a curse to him. In what respect did the Emperor, the army, and the government official, profit the great working-class community, nine-tenths of the entire Russian populace? He found in the end that affluence and luxury were as great a curse to the ruling as crushing poverty was to the subject class. Tolstoy’s greatness is seen in this, that he pleads the cause of man as man, refusing to be made the mouth-piece or agent of any sect or party. He teaches the gospel of brotherhood not simply to men of one nation, but to all men on the ground of their humanity. His, therefore, I proclaim to be a voice of prophecy for the new age. All legislation conceived in the interest of one class, embodying the

spirit of bitterness and of reprisal in regard to the inheritors of ancient and often corrupting privilege, is alien to the true interest of that class. The true eternal interests of humanity cannot be realised or fostered by helping the toilers of to-day to seize the privileges which have been in truth a great curse to the wealthy and aristocratic classes of society. All class hatred and strife are accursed. Advantages seized, or wrested from others to be by ourselves enjoyed, will prove only a curse, as all exclusive profit and pleasure is and must prove a curse. Envy and hate cannot further the cause of Humanity.

This thought leads me to commend the teaching of Leo Tolstoy to working-men who, though they may not be attached to any Christian church, in their hearts love Jesus Christ, and believe in His teaching, and are persuaded that we should have a much better world were all men to strive to act up to the simple requirements of His laws of love and justice. It is passing strange, yet true, that in a country covered with "the white robe of churches," few men appear to have seriously studied the question: What did Jesus really mean? What did He teach? How did He wish men to live? About the middle period of his life, Tolstoy began to ask these questions: What is my life? What does it mean? Why am I here? What will be the end

of it all? He believed that he found an answer to the enigma of life in the long-neglected precepts of the four Gospels, and in particular the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount. There are, as he saw, multitudes of men who acknowledge that they ought to live in love and to show themselves brotherly, but who are not at all the better for their belief, because they do not take Jesus Christ at His word, because they shrink from even trying to act the brother's or the neighbour's part as He described it. In the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, Jesus left abstract principle for definite precepts. He showed the law of brotherhood at work. Now, whereas there are hundreds of men who will admit that they ought to be brotherly, there is scarcely one who will act the brother's part as depicted by the Divine Master. Tolstoy, who saw that men were bent on being Christians on easy terms, confessing the abstruse dogmas of the Church, which do not cost them anything, but shrinking from the practical brotherhood of the kingdom of God, urges that we should in religion, as elsewhere, begin with what is simplest and go on to what is more difficult. Go, that is, to the Gospels and begin by accepting and acting up to that which Christ made so plain that no honest inquirer can mistake His meaning. Faith, as he understands and uses the

word, means not believing things that are incredible but being quite loyal in regard to things which at the moment we feel to be most true and wise and good. It was as clear as daylight to Tolstoy that Jesus Christ taught that anger was sin, whether as between man and man, or nation and nation, and that, therefore, war, which means wholesale murder, is the greatest of all the curses under which humanity has languished and the Spirit of Christ been quenched. Probably Tolstoy does less than justice to the gradual infiltration of the Spirit of Christ in society, to the working of the leaven of truth in the world, to the gradual betterment of the social organism under the influence of the Divine Spirit, but he compels us to face the undeniable and terrible fact that after twenty centuries of Christian teaching, the Christian Church, as a whole, accepts war as inevitable, and treats the plainest words in the Gospels as if they had no definite assignable meaning. The Church as allied with the State has done nothing, or next to nothing, to "make wars to cease unto the end of the earth." And what he says is true,—at least in Russia—that instead of telling men that war is the greatest of all the sins of man against man, and the fruitful cause of the most grievous burdens from which a patient and peace-loving people suffer, the Church sends her priests to bless the engines of destruction, and to pray

that God would be pleased to scatter their enemies ; though the working people know full well that the toilers of other lands are not their enemies at all. What did Christ say ? " I say unto you, that every-one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." A wrong thing does not become a right thing by doing it on a vast scale. It is unmistakably the case that conscience is confused when wrong is done on a vast scale. A man kills his brother and we call it murder, but when the State undertakes to kill on a tremendous scale, we shudder indeed, but are not afraid to ask a blessing. This is not a solitary example of the fact that what looks wicked or mean on a small scale looks grand and reputable if committed on a great scale. A member of the English aristocracy would scorn to ally himself with the daughter of a small tradesman, because trade is beneath him, but if, instead of doing a little of the bad thing we call " trade," he succeeds in doing a vast amount of it—if only he is a big enough sinner and makes a million—instead of shunning him all the more on that account, he is ready to condone the offence and to enter into league with the offender. *Pecca fortiter !* Don't sin at all, but if you sin let it be magnificently and you will be pardoned.

Similarly Tolstoy would have us take Christ



literally when He taught us to master evil and fleshly passion,—for only the pure in heart can see God;—when He forbade us to swear,—and by that Christ did not mean to enter protest against what is commonly called “bad language,” but against the oath by which a man swears away his own conscience and becomes morally the slave of his king or his captain. No man has any right to barter and make away with the light and law of his own soul, that Divine law of which the Bible says: it is “very nigh unto thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth that thou mayest do it.” Christ taught positively the universal law of charity and of benevolence. If we would indeed be children of God our Heavenly Father we must act towards our brethren as He acts towards all of us, with an equal and impartial kindness, for “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.” It is no part of the good man to treat those who disagree with him as enemies to be injured, or heretics to be excommunicated or tortured into an avowed, and in all probability pretended, agreement. That which love and truth cannot accomplish hand in hand, is not worth doing at all. The great end of justice is surely to help all men everywhere to realise the richest harvest of good of which their God-kindled lives

are capable, and to that task love alone is adequate.

To all of us who believe that the Christian Gospel alone can solve the problems of the sin and sorrow of the ages, this teaching makes a strong appeal. If Christianity has not yet "loosed the bands of wickedness, and broken every yoke," may not the cause of failure be that we have not had Christianity enough, that the teaching of Christ has been so diluted and attenuated as to have become powerless?

In these opening words I have directed attention to principles which it took Tolstoy many long years of thought and struggle to reach. I have drawn attention to them at the outset, because they are such as concern every working-man in England. It will be seen that Tolstoy is not a Socialist, inasmuch as he does not look for the improvement of human lot by the establishment of any new form of government, but for the improvement of society by the salvation of the men composing society. In this sense Tolstoy is profoundly Christian. Possibly he regards the evils of the social organism, with more concern than Christ, who did not "fling Himself into the social issues of His time," but whether we regard the improvement of social conditions as the end aimed at by the Gospel, or, with Professor



Peabody of Harvard, as a "by-product," we cannot doubt that the penetration of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of men, in other words, *the saving of the individual* is the saving of society.





*YASNAYA POLYANA,  
Count Tolstoy's Home (Front).*



*YASNAYA POLYANA,  
Count Tolstoy's Home (Back),  
From "All the Russias," by permission of W. Heineman,*

## CHAPTER I.

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### Childhood.

“ I WAS born,” says Tolstoy, “and spent my earliest childhood in the village Yasnaya Polyana, in the Province of Tula, ten miles south of the town of Tula—a beautiful hilly neighbourhood.” The old homestead no longer stands in the village, for Tolstoy sold it early in life to a neighbouring landowner, who removed it to the neighbouring village of Dolgoye. It will be gathered that though a large and somewhat imposing edifice of its kind, it was of wood and movable. His present country house is but a wing of the former mansion. The space once occupied by the removed mansion is now a croquet lawn. Although a Russian country house is far from being as well cared for as the house of an English squire or nobleman, this domain is one of real charm, and has many amenities. We must picture the front of the house as adorned with flower-beds, beyond which is a garden left very much as Nature made it, with ponds and a lime-tree avenue. In this house, as it stood in its unmutilated condition, Tolstoy was born on 28th August, 1828. Twenty-four years later appeared his

first important work, entitled *Childhood*, which was intended to be the first of a series of memoirs which, taken together, would constitute one great novel founded on the traditions of his family and revealing his own personal inner soul history. I believe that Tolstoy meant to bequeath his spirit not his relics to posterity. In his reminiscences and in his novels he is bent on one thing—the presentation of the life of his spirit. Many of his disciples believe that his thought and his faith have a virility surpassing that of any teacher since the great Master Himself. His books are self-revelations. Certainly no modern teacher has dared so boldly to unveil his inner life from first to last; so that to know his books is to know his inmost thought and deepest affections, and with this result—we are, when they have made their impression on us, for ever numbered among his friends or foes.

There is no story of child-life to be compared with that given us in *Childhood*. Even were we indifferent to the story as it relates to the early years of the great Russian teacher, we should return to it again and again as a record of unprecedented truth and insight of the inner life of a child; and the first thing we are conscious of, is that we have to deal with a child excessively, even morbidly, sensitive. His intellect is as precocious as his impressions are

preternaturally vivid. He was born a poet by reason of his vivid imagination and keen perceptive power. From the very first we see the bright imagination and the poetic temperament, and the critical reason warring with both. Tolstoy began by having visions which, like all his experiences, are subject to the investigation of the reasoning faculty.

Very significant of the future warrior, of the man who was to live to battle with his own doubts and with the crushing woes and crushing burdens of his struggling fellow-creatures, was his earliest impression of himself and of the world in which he lived. He thinks he can remember being swaddled, and that he battled to free himself. His first impression is that of the injustice of fate—he is weak and in the hands of others stronger than himself.

And his second recorded experience confirms my conviction that the sufficient clue to Tolstoy's life-work is his hatred of oppression, his feeling for freedom, his determination to assert himself. The boys of the family were taught by a German tutor named Fedor Ivanovitch Rössel, known in the novel as Karl Ivanitch. Leo tells how one morning he was rudely awakened by his tutor striking at flies above his bed with a flapper. He is incensed by the indignity. Why, he thought, does he not kill flies over Volodya's (his elder brother's) bed? The man

was a good, simple, unsophisticated German who was deeply attached to his young pupils, but Tolstoy conceived at the moment a strong disgust for the uncouth man with his worn dressing-gown, with cap and tassel. Then to make matters worse, when Leo refused to be wakened and pretended to be dozing, Karl began to tickle his toes, and he cried with vexation. The kind, gentle creature asked wonderingly what was the matter? The sensitive child did what most sensitive children do when pressed to say more than they like of what is passing in their minds. He invented an excuse better fitted to account for his tears than the actual fact. "I have had a bad dream," he said. The dream, it should be said, was about his mother, and in this respect the story departs from the actual facts of his history, for his mother died when he was but three years old. On the whole, his must have been as happy a childhood as was possible for so sensitive a mortal.

The home was thoroughly characteristic of Russian aristocratic society seventy years ago. Although the children were committed to the care of tutor or governess, and while their lessons were no child's play, they were not only brought up in affluence, but were surrounded by men and women servants who vied with one another in respectful affection, and in the kind of interest which servants feel who



are brought up in great houses, and who are on terms of respectful intimacy with their masters and mistresses; and it should be understood that that intimacy is often much more close and kindly than is at all common in England. The distinctions of rank were marked, but the servants—whether tutor or steward or valet, housemaid or nursemaid—were made part of the home circle. Natalia, an old servant, in a time prior to the emancipation of the serfs, was grieved at the thought that her mistress was bent on emancipating her from slavery. She had never dreamed of any life outside her master's affluent and kindly home, in which the servants bore a mild yoke from which they sought no escape.

Let us take a glance at other members of the household. It has been said that his mother, whom he could not have known, yet whose image was indelibly imprinted on the heart of the motherless child, died when he was but three years old. Of his father, more will be heard in the course of this narrative. His character has been depicted in *War and Peace*. He lives for us in those glowing pages in the person of Count Rostov. The father depicted in the early work, *Childhood*, is admittedly fictitious, and in important particulars unlike his own father, who died in 1837. A distant relative, the "Aunt" of the *Reminiscences*, had more to do with the

shaping of his character in his early years than any other person. She had loved his father when a young girl, and her love appears to have been returned, but they were not betrothed, in order that he might marry a richer woman. After his mother's death, she refused the offer made her of his father's hand, but she accepted the charge of his young family, and fulfilled it with all a mother's tenderness and self-sacrificing devotion. "I remember," he writes, "how once on the sofa in the drawing-room, when I was about five, I squeezed in behind her, and she caressingly touched me with her hand. I caught this hand and began to kiss it and to cry for tender love of her." She was a woman of exceptional capacity as well as of self-sacrificing affection, trained, as all ladies of the higher class of Russian society then were, to speak French, with which she was more familiar than with Russian. She played the piano well. Sometimes Leo played duets with her when he was sufficiently advanced to do so. It has always been a joy to Tolstoy that this good and dear friend of his childhood spent the last twenty years of her life with him at the old home Yasnaya Polyana. To her he owed much, especially his life-long conviction that to love all things are possible, and that there is nothing good without it. In her presence he breathed an atmosphere of purity

and love, learning how good it is to love and to be loved. From her, too, he learned to appreciate the peaceful, unhurried and simple life of the country-side.

Tolstoy's *Reminiscences* do not add much to the intimate knowledge of his earliest years afforded by *Childhood*, but he tells us some interesting stories about his brother Nicolay, who was six years his senior, and of whom the great novelist Turgeniev said that but for certain faults he would have been a great writer. By that he meant that he had not vanity enough to study style, or to care what people thought of him or his writings. Nicolay would tell them thrilling stories of winter nights, without pause or hesitation, and with such ease and fluency that they quite forgot that he was making up as he went along.

But if he had a deep respect for Nicolay he adored his brother Sergey. "I loved him," he writes, "and wished to be like him; I admired his handsome appearance, his singing—he was always singing—his drawing, his cheerful gaiety, and especially, though it may sound strange to say it, the spontaneity of his egotism . . . I loved Nicolay, but for Sergey I was filled with admiration as for something quite apart from me and incomprehensible to me, something mysterious, and therefore specially attractive." "A few days ago," he wrote in his *Reminiscences*,

"he died, and in his last illness and his death, he was as unfathomable and as dear as in bygone days of childhood. In more advanced age, his latter days, he loved me more, valued my attachment, was proud of me, wished to agree with me, but could not, and remained the same as he had been, entirely original, altogether himself, handsome, high-spirited, proud, and above all and to such an extent a truthful and sincere man that I have never seen his like."

Such, then, was the household. What of the higher influences at work in it? Many persons have a prejudice, that nothing will suffice to dissipate regarding the Russian Church. It is nothing but ignorant superstition and childish ceremonial! But religion was a very real thing, and a very helpful influence in this home. True, its forms are unfamiliar to us, and many of its customs strike us as grotesque, but neither sacerdotalism nor ritual has sapped the religion of the heart. As a people, the Russians are intensely religious. The whole of life is felt to be pervaded by heavenly influences, and overlooked and cared for by higher and holier beings. Tolstoy tells of the visit to the home of a wandering ascetic, whose pilgrim's garb and whose heavy chains wound about his body, filled them as children with curiosity and awe. They tried to catch sight of him in hiding

when he went to bed, for such as he, were held in honour, and were hospitably received. They held their breath as they heard him crying out to the Lord Jesus. They watched him kneel before the sacred *icon*. They heard him pray, though his prayer was often incoherent. They were touched to hear him pray for his hospitable hosts and for them—the children. They had expected to have fine fun out of the strange and terrible man, but they felt only fear as he sank with a rattle of chains on his bed. Then he repeated, “Lord have mercy,” several times, and added these touching, beautiful words: “Forgive me, Lord, teach me what I ought to do ; teach me what I ought to do, Lord ; Thy will be done.” I quote as much, not only because of the light it sheds on Russian domestic religious life seventy years ago, but because of the impression made by these agonising prayers on the tender awakening mind of the child-listener, because, while Tolstoy has become such an uncompromising critic of the doctrine and ritual of the Russian Church, he felt, and surely still feels, in strong sympathy with the pathetic, unquestioning faith of the common people. Indeed, he confesses, “many memories of the past have lost all significance for me and have become like confused visions ; even pilgrim Grischa has long ago taken his last journey ; but the



impression made upon me, and the feeling which he awakened, will never die out of my memory. Oh Grisha, good Christian, thy faith was so strong that thou didst feel the nearness of God ; thy love was so great that thy words poured from thy lips unforced. What lofty praise was thine when, finding no words to offer to the Majesty on high, thou didst fall on the ground with tears." "No religion," said Carlyle, "is founded on a sham." Only superficial critics imagine that the faith of the Russian people was the creation of mercenary priests, or that the people who were taught to love the Gospels—those records of the words of Jesus which, later on, wrought such a complete transformation in the ideas and the life of Tolstoy—are shut up in a gloomy prison-house of superstition and muttered spells, in bondage to a priesthood that exists to keep all Gospel light from shining into their souls. True, the priesthood is too frequently represented by peasants only less ignorant than their poor parishioners ; true, that in many places the priest is honoured for his offices and lightly regarded as a man, but priestcraft scarcely exists in Russia. The power of the priest is confined to the performance of his sacred offices in the Church and in the home. He has not the knowledge or the superior wit that enables the Roman priesthood to exercise a sinister influence whether in the

State or in the home. We may feel sure that, in spite of "maimed rites" and a sad dearth of prophetic voices, Christ is in the Russian Church, and is enshrined in the heart of the Russian people.

When Leo was nine years old, the old happy life was suddenly and sadly broken in upon. Preparations were made for a great change. Their father told them that it was high time that they should be taking to their studies seriously, and that he intended to take them with him to Moscow. Tolstoy, as I have explained, tells the story of his childhood not by detailing the events of each day after the fashion of a precise diarist. He selects events that made a deep impression on his mind, and that had some formative influence on his career. Here is such an one. They are installed in their grandmother's stately and aristocratic home in Moscow. It is her "Name Day." The house is besieged with visitors. The first is a disagreeable, dried-up woman of middle-age, who claimed a distant relationship with the family. After speaking of her own son, of his wild ways and clever pranks, she cried: "That's a nice sort of a boy, isn't it? He deserved a whipping." "Do you whip your children, my dear?" asked grandmother. "Ah, my good aunt," replied the Princess, "I know your opinions on that point." Then she proceeded to expatiate on the necessity of



mastering children by fear. Children fear nothing so much as the rod, therefore there is nothing so good for them, and whatever you may say, she added, "a boy of twelve, or even fourteen, is still but a child." Against this conventional severity the soul of the listening Leo arose in bitter and scornful protest. He secretly thanked God he was not that woman's son. He thoroughly endorsed his grandmother's reply: "That is all very well, but what delicacy of feeling can you expect in your children after such treatment?" His father who is represented as being present at the interview, pointed out his elder son as his "man of the world." Pointing to Leo, he said, "and this is our poet." "Which?" demanded the Princess. "Why, that one with the tuft on his crown," said his father. Ah! that tuft; how often had he striven in vain with a wet brush to reduce those obstinate locks to order. The sensitive boy was overcome by this chance reference to the hated "tuft." He felt deeply conscious of his inferiority in personal appearance to his handsome brother. His features were rugged, his nose too long and too flat at the nostrils. A glance at any of Tolstoy's later portraits will explain his early dissatisfaction with his personal appearance. There is not much that is pleasing in his face, which has been compared with that of Socrates. The upper part of the face, the

lofty brow and deep-set, thoughtful eyes are the redeeming features, but the broad-splayed nose and protruding under lip are not attractive. In spite of the assurance once given him, that no one would love him for a fine face, and that he might become a good and sensible boy in spite of personal defects, moments of despair came to him when he reflected on what he considered to be his ugliness. "I fancied that there was no happiness on earth for one with such a wide nose, such thick lips, and such small grey eyes as I had; I besought God to work a miracle and to make me beautiful. All that I had in the present, all that I might have hereafter, I would give in exchange for a beautiful face."

Describing his extreme shyness and sensitiveness, and the misery he experienced by having to wear a dilapidated pair of gloves at a dance, he adds this after reflection: "The sufferings of shy people arise from their uncertainty as to the opinion which people have formed of them; as soon as that opinion has been demonstrated, this suffering ceases."

I think that it will be already sufficiently obvious that the child who was father to the man, was a child of exceptional thoughtfulness and precocity, morbidly self-conscious, shy, and passionately resentful of tyranny and of correction. Such, for good and ill,

was the child Leo. It is by virtue of our temperament that we are what we are, and that we do what we do. In the precocious thoughtfulness and powers of observation of this sensitive, shy, reserved child, we realise the material out of which the genius and strikingly marked characteristics of the great thinker and reformer would speedily develop.

## CHAPTER II.

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### "Boyhood."

THE removal of the family to Moscow occurred in the year 1836. In the following summer Count Tolstoy went to Tula on business, and while there was taken ill in the street. He was seen to stagger and fall. He died of apoplexy, and his body was brought home to Yasnaya to be buried. He left five children. Nicolay, Sergey, Dmitri, Leo the youngest boy, and Mashenka the only girl, at whose birth their mother died.

Leo had a great affection for his father, a very different person from the spendthrift father described in *Childhood*. He had spent his time after the manner of the *noblesse* who were not in the Government service, in the management of his estate, for which task he had but little aptitude. He was tenderly solicitous for his children's welfare, and fond of reading, though by no means a scholar. The children's happiest memories were associated with him, and especially with the hour before bedtime, when they clambered on to his knee, or on the back of his great leather chair, and listened to his stories,

or marvelled at the pictures he drew for them, which appeared to them the height of perfection. "I remember," writes Leo, "his merry jokes at dinner and supper, and how my grandmother and aunt and we children laughed as we listened to him . . . but the pleasantest recollections of him were those of his sitting with grandmother on the sofa and helping her to play Patience. My father was polite and tender with everyone, but to grandmother he was always particularly, tenderly subservient. I loved my father very much, but did not know how strong this love of mine was until he died." Tolstoy has given us the true picture of his father and mother in the pages of *War and Peace*, in the characters of Count Nicolay Ilyitch Rostov and Princess Marya Bolonsky.

His father's death made, as it could not but have done, a profound impression on Leo's mind. We must remember that he was but a child of nine. He could not believe that his father was gone for ever from his sight. For a long time he would look into empty rooms and search the faces of passers by, thinking that at any moment he might see him again. That Count Tolstoy must have been a man of generous and affectionate disposition is evident, and his death made a terrible difference in the home in Moscow. His grandmother wept perpetually.

Grief almost drove her to distraction. She thought she saw her son and conversed with him. When she quickly followed her son, dying of a broken heart, it was the terrible whiteness of death that wrought itself into the substance of the boy's brain. All was white. He takes his last look, and there he saw her and shuddered, a white face on a white pillow, as he kissed her white hand lying on the white coverlet.

But with Tolstoy's inevitable candour, he tells us how the dreadful impressions of the death chamber speedily gave place to a child's fun, and what his tutor regarded as ill-timed mirth. He came in and sternly rebuked him, saying, "*Votre grand' mère est morte!*"

"I remember," he writes, "how at that time new jackets of black material, bound with white braid, were made for all of us. . . . It was piteous to see the tears of our aunt and of Mashenka; but at the same time the new braided jackets and the soothing attitude taken towards us by those around us gratified us. I remember how pleasant it was to me to overhear a conversation of some weeping female guests near us, who said: "Completely orphans, the father has only just died, and now the grandmother has gone too."

After the death of his grandmother, part of the family retired to the old country home, namely,



Dmitri, Leo and Marie, with their Aunt Tatiana Yergolsky. Their guardian was the Countess A. I. Osten-Saken of whom he writes: "My aunt was a truly religious woman. Her favourite reading was the *Lives of the Saints*, conversing with pilgrims, crazy devotees, monks and nuns, of whom some always lived at our house, while others only visited my aunt. . . . She was not only outwardly religious, keeping the fasts, praying much, and associating with people of saintly life . . . but she herself lived a truly Christian life, endeavouring not only to avoid all luxury and acceptance of service, but also, as much as possible, to serve others. She never had any money, because she gave all she had to those who asked."

The plans of the family were then arranged thus—the three younger children, including Leo, lived in the country with their Aunt Tatiana, and the elder brothers remained with their guardian, the Countess Osten-Saken, in Moscow. But they all met in the summer at Yasnaya Polyana. Two years passed by, when a year of terrible famine resulted in crops so meagre that corn had to be bought to feed the serfs, and for this purpose one of their estates had to be sold. Tolstoy tells how sorry the children were for their favourite horses who could not be fed with corn, and how they would go secretly and pluck oats for them. In the autumn of that year of famine,



1840, the whole family was reunited, settling in Moscow. There they spent the following winter, and when summer came round again they returned to the country. In the autumn of 1840 their aunt, Countess Osten-Saken, died. On her death her sister, the Countess Yushkov, wife of a landowner of Kazan, came to take the young people under her charge. Leo was then ten years old. The journey involved in those days considerable preparations; it meant, indeed, the transference of a great household from one town to another at a time when journeys had to be made by road or river. The household goods were deported by river, while numerous carriages were provided for the family and their personal attendants. The record of that journey to Kazan reads like the story of a great picnic, for they made their long progress as pleasantly as possible, halting from time to time as the nature of the country through which they passed and the state of the weather suggested. Sometimes they made parties into the woods which they skirted, sometimes they made bathing expeditions, sometimes they went mushroom gathering. The new guardian was like her sister, a pious woman, but without any intellectual distinction.

During this period the boy's shyness grew upon him, and he was more distressed than ever by what

he considered his ugliness. When we come to examine any of the numerous portraits of him that are available, they give the impression of a kindly, serious, and rather strange, but by no means repulsive, countenance.

Two well-remembered events of this time are sufficiently indicative of his abnormal sensitiveness—but are not most children regarded as curiously sensitive when their inner thoughts and feelings are laid bare for the criticism of their elders? The first is the recollection of a childrens' Christmas party to which he was invited with his brothers, after the death of their father and grandmother. They were then living with their aunt, who was poor as compared with their grandmother and many other of their relatives and friends, and Tolstoy recalls the intense shame and indignation with which he received presents, plain and inexpensive as compared with those given to the Princes Gorchakov, nephews of the Minister of War.

Another example is as follows: The boys were taking a walk with their tutor and a girl named Yuzenka, a daughter of the French governess. Yuzenka was a good-looking, attractive girl. On the way they found themselves near a beautiful garden, and the gate was open. After some hesitation, they entered. The garden charmed

them all. There was everything there to please children—a pond, boats, flags and flowers, a small bridge, mazy paths and shaded bowers. They felt that they were in a place of enchantment. All at once they were startled by coming on a gentleman who appeared to be the owner of this paradise. He speedily put them at their ease, affably invited them to look round, gave them a row on the lake, and altogether showed himself so friendly that they really believed that their presence gave him pleasure. Encouraged by their good fortune they decided to visit the garden again in a few days' time. When they reached the gate they were stopped by an old gardener who asked what they wanted? They at once gave their name, and begged to be announced to the master. Yuzenka was not with them on this occasion. The old gardener returned with the curt and chilling message that the garden was private property and not open to the public. They went away full of vexation and shame, and utterly unable to understand that the absence of Yuzenka's pretty face made all the difference in the attitude of the lord and master of the garden in respect of uninvited guests.

I have said that Tolstoy's shyness grew upon him. He seemed quite unable to do the ordinary thing in the ordinary way, and when his eccentricities were

remarked upon, he became doubly nervous and strange in manner. Sometimes the things he said, as a boy, seemed to older people "too funny for words," and conventional people were apt to think him "daft." His wife recalls the tales of old aunts who told stories of these his early days. Judging from these tales, she says, "little Lyovchka was a peculiar child, in fact, quite a little oddity." An example of this is given by his brother-in-law. We shall see later on that Tolstoy was in love with the mother of his future wife when quite a little boy. The love was serious, and it was reciprocated. One day they were standing together on a balcony, when Tolstoy pushed the object of his youthful affections off the steps on which she was standing, causing her a sprained ankle, and all because she would not talk to him but to someone else! Later on when he had asked her for her daughter's hand, she laughingly reminded him of his method of courtship in earlier days. "Evidently," she said, "you pushed me off the terrace in my childhood that you might marry my daughter afterwards."

These incidents are taken from Tolstoy's *Reminiscences* for the most part. I have given, at the same time, a bare outline of the period covered by the second part of the novel, dealing in an autobiographical manner with the inner life of his boyhood's days.

I propose to turn to that work for some further illustration of what is so much more important than the adventures which seem all-important to the boy himself.

The family were settled in Moscow after the time of their temporary separation, to which reference has been made, when Tolstoy began to notice a change in his elder brother. He was not so much older in years, but evidently he was beginning to gain some of the tastes and feelings of manhood. Nothing escaped the curious eyes, the penetrating criticism of that active mind. We are dealing, remember, with one of the few writers who have dared to be quite frank in regard to his own inner life. He realised that the servants began to have an attraction for his brother. He watched and was astounded to discover that he was in the habit of kissing the pretty maid-servant, Mascha. "I cannot express," he says, "the amazement which this discovery caused me ; but the feeling of amazement soon gave place to sympathy." What surprised this youthful philosopher was now, not that he acted as he did, but the problem that pressed for solution was, how his brother came to know that it was pleasant to act as he did? "However," he said, "I began to want to imitate him." In his extreme frankness he explains that the only reason why he did not do so was that he was



modest by nature, and that this modesty was increased by the conviction of his ugliness ; and it may be worth noticing that Tolstoy believed, and believes still, that nothing has such a decisive influence upon a man's career as his personal appearance, or rather his belief in the attractiveness or unattractiveness of that appearance.

A much more important indication of the character of the boy, affording, as I cannot but think, one of the essential clues to his after life and mission, was his fierce and passionate resistance of wrong—especially of tyranny—as far as it can be resisted by purely intellectual means. He hated—no milder word will serve—he *hated* his new tutor, Prosper Saint-Thomas, known in the *Memoirs* as St. Jerome, and who had come to take the place of the German Rössel. Instead of the old bald head, the list slippers, the loose dressing-gown, behold a dapper, polished Frenchman, full of self-importance and the pride of knowledge, a man who aimed at being at once a dandy and a scholar. Tolstoy, after his fashion, hurries us off at once to the crucial hour of his relations with this gentleman. A visiting master in history had reported him for a badly learned lesson. Saint-Thomas entered the drawing-room and, in the disdainful and severe manner which Leo loathed, ordered him back to the school-room.

The tutor's manner was so insulting that the boy refused to stir. "Very well," replied Saint-Thomas icily. "Your grandmother has frequently begged you off. Now I see that nothing but the rod will do for you. You have fully deserved it to-day." The blood at these words, he tells us, retreated violently from his heart, and his lips trembled involuntarily. No sooner had the tutor laid his hands upon him to lead him away than, beside himself with rage, he struck out at him with all his child's strength. He was maddened by the feeling that has maddened so many children, old beyond their years, of the tyranny of age that can exert physical strength but that cannot *understand*. Such a child has—I fear this will be heresy to many—but one way of maintaining self-respect. To submit to be whipped is dishonour; to be beaten in an unequal combat with superior strength is no more dishonourable or shameful than when a small army is conquered by a big one. Five minutes later the garret door had closed upon poor Leo. "Basil," said the tutor to the man-servant, in a revoltingly triumphant voice, "bring me the rod." Nothing finer has been written than what follows, no more utterly truthful and enthralling account of what goes on in the soul of an abused child—a child thoughtful beyond his years. He was from that moment convinced that the world had gone



utterly wrong, and that everyone hated him. What follows will be utterly inexplicable to many readers. His sensitive imagination, preternaturally quickened by suffering, suggested to him that he could not be the son of his father and mother. He was only an adopted child. To-morrow he would go to his father whom he dearly loved, and say: "Father, I know the truth. I am not your child. Let me go away—let me leave you." This strange reverie had taken him out of himself. Now he remembers again the shame of the present moment. But fancy's wings came again to his help, and he was carried away to a field of battle. He was himself a soldier—he had entered the Hussars—he sees himself doing noble deeds in battle—sees his General stooping down over his wounded body—sees himself walking along the Tversky Boulevard, the admired of all beholders, when the Emperor meets him and greets him as the saviour of Russia. Then again the thought of his hated foe flashes across his brain, and when the Tsar asks him what he can do to signalise his approbation, he asks that he may be permitted to annihilate the detested and detestable foreigner. Again the thought that the detestable foreigner was at that moment not far off put an end to his dream.

Then follows the thought of God—God is punishing him. Why?

This is his first religious doubt. Then and there the thought of injustice, against which Tolstoy's whole life has been a prolonged, unceasing battle, invaded his soul. The seed of doubt, like seed fallen on soft earth after rain, began to grow. Then follows a marvellous train of thought for a child. He thought that he should surely die, that, as in one of Savischna's stories, the soul of a dead person does not quit the house for forty days, his soul would haunt the old home. He conceives himself or his spirit listening to the conversations of the living—he hears his father say that he had been, after all, a fine boy, and sees him chase the hated tutor from the house with execration as the cause of his son's death.

The expected punishment does not occur; his grandmother objected to the ill-usage of children. He is taken down by the smiling, cynical master to her room. She begs him to go down on his knees and beg pardon of the Frenchman. He trembled all over but would not move. "Koko" (this was a pet name), "Koko," said his grandmother, in a gentle voice. "Is this you?" "Grandmother, I will not beg his pardon because—" I was suffocating. "I command, I entreat you," she said. "I won't, I can't," I said. When the old lady, who is not represented here as the clear-sighted and majestic

woman with whom we are familiar from other glimpses we get of her character, went off into hysterics, and the servants ran for restoratives, the Frenchman said: "Now, admire your work," and as he was led away, he thought: "My God, what have I done? What a criminal I must be!"

I have recalled this episode of *Childhood* at some length, for it is one that lets us have a good long look into the innermost mind of the child. This temper of his is not characteristically Russian. Some writers love to dwell on his German ancestry, and on the blood of Montenegro in his veins. He is not patient of wrong. His tutor was not, of course, quite the man that the child saw and hated. He tells us in later years, when he could look back on this incident calmly, that his tutor was a thorough Frenchman, not stupid, tolerably well educated, diligent in the discharge of his duties, but he adds: "He possessed the distinctive traits of his countrymen, and which are so repugnant to the Russian character — egotism, vanity, impudence and overweening self-confidence."

The story of his boyhood presents no new features. As in the case of the child, it is the tale of the growth of two dominant traits of character — passionate sensitiveness, and abnormally developed reflectiveness.

Possibly there are many who cannot remember ever being troubled or concerned in any way, as children, about the deepest questions that can occupy the human mind, but there are others who have been occupied as far back as they can penetrate with the supreme questions. Tolstoy's young mind was intermittently distracted by the problems of fate and freedom of personal responsibility and immortality. The root ideas that serve as starting-points of the great philosophies arise inevitably in a reflective mind. For example, the thought occurred to Leo that the mind is, or may be, quite independent for its happiness of external circumstances. When he was ten years of age he was wrestling with the problem to which so-called Christian Science gives its one-sided, impossible solution. It is not, as he thought, external things that make or mar our happiness, but our relation and attitude to them. He resolved to put his conclusions to practical tests. He sought to accustom himself to the severest trials of strength and patience. Thus he would hold a great lexicon on his outstretched hand for five minutes at a stretch, and again go to the garret and beat his bare back till the pain drew tears involuntarily from his eyes.

Then there were times when the epicurean gained ascendancy in him. Death, he said to himself, was

coming. Why lose the fleeting happiness of life? Under the influence of such reflections he would go to the opposite extreme of neglect of lessons; he would lie in bed reading French novels, eating gingerbread and honey, on which he would spend his last penny. There followed for the youthful philosopher the reaction which we call scepticism. The mind finds itself equally satisfied and dissatisfied with either solution of the fundamental question: "How ought we to live?" What can I know but that I think certain thoughts? In my reflections I am not being led by any weight of external evidence towards the imaginary and illusory goal we call truth. Thinking is simply the occupation of the mind, the pleasurable exercise of mental functions. He imagined that he might, in fact, be alone in the universe, that there was nothing there but his thinking mind, and that what were called objects were not actually or externally existent. He went even further. Tolstoy himself regards his state of mind as one bordering on mental derangement. He tried by thought to glimpse that world of nothingness which he began to postulate as the real environment of his being. He would thus glance quickly in an opposite direction from that in which he had been looking, hoping to find the nothingness, to catch a sight of the eternal void by which

he was encompassed. In later life Tolstoy — most practical of thinkers — turned with deep distrust and aversion from metaphysics as the most utterly useless of pursuits. From these early and precocious endeavours to grapple with the why and wherefore of human existence, he found that he had brought away nothing good and available for use in life but a certain mental alacrity which he thought weakened the will power, and a habit of moral analysis which tended to destroy the freshness of his feelings and the clearness of his judgment.



## CHAPTER III.

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### **Life in a Russian University.**

THE present chapter must be occupied with what Tolstoy has seen fit to disclose concerning his two years experience of university life at Kazan, which began in the year 1843. Like so many original thinkers, so many artists and poets, he was easily distanced at the University by men of ordinary gifts, who make distinction in the examinations the one aim of their lives during their student years. Tolstoy did not shine as a student, neither did he take kindly to the life. The reason for his lack of delight in association with some of the brightest intellects of his time, and in comradeship with his fellow-students, must be sought in a certain aloofness of disposition occasioned by his excessive shyness and self-consciousness, which made it hard for him to be his best, whether as a student sitting at the feet of learned professors, or as a boy with boys. Then, too, he entered the university far too young. He was barely sixteen, and it is little wonder if the temptations abounding in the society of young men, all for the first time suddenly liberated from the thralldom of



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the school-room, proved too seductive. Certainly Tolstoy was not at his best during those two years.

But some of the peculiarities of the Russian system may be of interest. Before entering on a course of study at Kazan, intending students were required to petition the Rector for permission to sit for the Entrance Examination. Tolstoy's petition, which is preserved in the University Archives, runs thus :

### PETITION

"To his Excellency the Rector of the Imperial Kazan University, the Councillor of State and Cavalier. Nicolay Invanovitch Lobachsvsky, Desiring to enter as a student of the Oriental Section (Turco Arab category) of the Kazan University, I beg your Excellency to allow me to appear before the Board of Examination. My papers: the certificate of birth from the Tula Theological Consistory, under N. 252, and the certificate of my noble origin from the Tula Noblemen's Board of Deputies, under N. 267, I have the honour to present herewith."

COUNT LEO TOLSTOY

The result of the examination was scarcely brilliant, though he obtained highest marks in French.

German, Arabic and Turco-Tartar, but only one mark out of five possible in History and Geography. He himself remarked opposite the "one" in History, "I knew nothing." Under Geography, "I knew less." Although he failed and could not obtain admission on the strength of this examination, two things surprise us. In the first place, we are astonished that a boy of sixteen should obtain full marks in Arabic, and that one so widely read for his years should fail in a subject like History. However, having petitioned for a second chance in the subjects in which he failed he was re-examined, and this time with sufficient success.

We are more concerned with the life he lived, than with his attainments as a student. Detractors of Tolstoy make the most of his penitent utterances of later years, in which he deploras the dissoluteness of his life at Kazan. But if we would arrive at reliable conclusions, we must read these utterances of a profoundly even morbidly introspective religion in the light of the average student life of his time, and of the ideas of youthful morality entertained even by devout people in Russia in the class to which he belonged. I do not exonerate him. I do not seek to minimise his admitted extravagance and his readiness to associate with all but the most vicious of his fellow-students. I wish only to

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guard my readers against the utterly false idea that he was a ringleader in folly and in vice. He was no such thing. Simply, the moral standard of his time among religious people in Russia was not ours. It is one which appears to us to be lamentably loose and defective. In passing judgment on a member of such a society it is absolutely essential to realise what his training had been, and what were the ideas and habits of his associates. It is necessary, for example, to face what is to us a terrible fact, namely, that Tolstoy's father and aunt, who were among the best people of their time in Russian society, arranged that Tolstoy's elder brother should live what we call an immoral life. They thought it necessary. Zagoskin's *Reminiscences of Tolstoy's Student Days*, exemplify the need of caution in accepting Tolstoy's most unfavourable account of himself at this period. I do not mean to say that he was a perfectly pure soul, following out the leadings of a high ideal of earnestness in intellectual work and of unselfish devotion to duty, but that in comparison with others he seems even then to have occupied a higher plane of life than the majority of his associates. Zagoskin writes that Tolstoy must instinctively have felt repelled by the demoralising atmosphere of the place. Tolstoy, on the other hand, denies that he felt any

such repulsion. Further on in his article, Zagoskin is amazed at "his moral power shown in his overcoming the temptations of the place." Tolstoy remarks: "On the contrary I am very thankful to Fate for having passed my first youth in an environment wherein a young man could be young without touching upon problems beyond his grasp; and for living, although an idle and luxurious life, yet not an evil one."

However this may be, the fact is that he was soon mixing in a fast set. He is still remembered by old inhabitants of the city as being frequently present at balls and soirees and aristocratic parties, though signalised by a curious awkwardness and shyness. He was not at all a ladies' man. This devotion to society, though one thinks it was not all bad for one so shy and reserved as himself, reacted seriously on his studies, as was bound to be the case. This, the results of his first half-yearly examinations plainly show. Only in French, which was practically his native tongue, did he obtain high marks. But repeated academic failures did not lessen his devotion to society, and at the end of the year he was compelled to go over the same ground again; in other words, he was not allowed to proceed to the proper work of a second year's man.

At the same time it is clear that his ill success was

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not altogether due to his idleness. We gather that the system of examination was largely oral, and that a man was almost entirely at the mercy of his examiner, who might spoil any man's chance of success if he was personally distasteful to him. Tolstoy writes in his *Reminiscences*: "The first year the Professor of Russian History prevented me from being passed on to the second course, notwithstanding the fact that I had not missed a single lecture and knew Russian History quite well, because he had a quarrel with my family. Besides, the same Professor gave me the lowest mark, one, for German, though I knew the language incomparably better than any student in our division."

He was so discouraged, and, if we may rely on the foregoing account, so reasonably incensed, that he determined to give up the course in Eastern languages, and go in for Jurisprudence instead. He was allowed to take this course, but, undeterred by past experience of the unwisdom of excessive devotion to the gaieties of life, he went into society with renewed zest. However, in spite of this, the May Examinations of 1846 went off well. He succeeded in obtaining five marks each for Logic and Psychology, and four each for Law and Latin.

This represents the best work he did while a student at Kazan. Let us then turn to the third



part of the Memoirs, entitled *Youth*, for some further indications of his character during this short spell of university life. Nothing is clearer than that his chief difficulty in getting on well with his fellow-students was his terrible shyness and *gaucherie*. If ever a man born to high place in the world was born with a peasant's heart and a peasant's awkwardness, it was Tolstoy. Thus he wanted in a kind of half-friendly, half-condescending way to make friends with some of his poorer fellows, known as "Crown Scholars," who appear to me to have occupied very much the same position in a Russian university as that of the sizars at Cambridge in our unregenerate days, when poverty was considered to be a crime. He appears to have shown a great want of tact in his relation with some of these, a deficiency that can be readily condoned in a boy suddenly freed, at the age of sixteen, from the restraints of the school-room, and launched without experience, with a large allowance, and unfettered liberty of action, upon university life. When he desired to commence a friendship with a Crown Scholar, he would begin by telling him that he was related to certain high government officials, and that he drove his own carriage; and he did this not to overawe the poor man, but to make him realise how desirable his friendship was! The obvious fact, of course, is that his character had had no time to



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mature, that he had not steadied down, that he did not know how to accomplish the kind enough purpose of his heart. But Tolstoy himself, looking back on those early days, gives the chief reason for his failure to make friends among the humbler set. I commend it to all who are trying to bring men of different social upbringing together, and who are perhaps realising for the first time how extremely hard it is to get people to mix, how hard it is to compose ruffled feelings and to soothe inherited antagonisms. "The principal reason," he pleads, "why no friendship could subsist between myself and my fellow-students was that my coat was made of cloth costing thirty-seven roubles per yard, while I had a droshky (gig) of my own and wore shirts of fine cambric."

It is disheartening work—this endeavour to bring people together. I have tried it. Some of my readers have done the same. We go into a working-men's club, or mingle with the boys and young men in the billiard-room or smoke-room of a university settlement, and are astonished at the courtesy and natural good manners of the company. You remark upon this to one of the workers. He, if he is the right sort of man, replies: "Why, these fellows are gentlemen, most of them, though they have only a few shillings a

week and wear poor clothes." But if you try to mix classes, difficulty arises at once. The man of the poor coat feels unhappy in the society of the man who is better dressed. It is the same as you ascend the social scale. You bring together in a drawing-room people belonging to the lower middle-class who dress well (as Londoners do by instinct), but with their terribly narrow outlook, their want of refinement and breadth of view, with people of the public school and university type, and they won't mix—*they can't*. Nothing causes such a deep gulf to yawn between people as culture on the one side, and the want of it on the other.

Let us who earnestly desire to bring about the brotherhood of men, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, look well to this, and face the facts. I once travelled with a young Oxford man who was going to take possession of his first "living." He said that he was glad he had but a pittance and a small insignificant vicarage, because nothing would separate him and his humble parishioners. I remarked rather sadly, "What will stand between you and them is not money but culture—not so much your dress as the fact of education and breeding—the possessions which are more intimate than the money in your purse, or the house you live in, or the appointments of your table."

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This is for all social reformers a difficult subject, and I, for my part, do not see any way out except through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When He has civilised a man he will be happy anywhere. The man of means, whether material or intellectual, will feel and act brotherly to the poorest and the most illiterate, and the working-man in his fustian will not envy the possessions and accomplishments of a brother better off than himself, any more than a man of moderate means envies the splendour of a prince. Tolstoy's panacea, as we shall see later on, is that the rich man shall strip himself of his riches, and abandoning, as far as possible, all that distinguishes him, live as a working-man among working-men. But we are anticipating and must return to Kazan.

It happened that, Easter falling late in his first year at the University, he was compelled to prepare for his Easter Communion and for his Entrance Examination at the same time. Some of my readers may not know that in the Eastern as in the Western Church, it is held a Christian's most essential duty and privilege to make his Communion every Easter, the difference being that in the Greek Church even children join their parents in this act of Christian faith. I cannot resist the opportunity of adducing Tolstoy's evidence regarding the effect on very young minds of such solemnities. The belief of the Church

is, undoubtedly, that participation in the Holy Communion, means for the child an association of his entire nature, physical and spiritual, with the Body and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Now in the great novel, *Anna Karenina*, a startling and at the same time painfully amusing description is given of a family of children thus taken to Mass, and of the utter failure of the younger members of the party to preserve a decorous and becoming behaviour during the rest of the day. Lili, the smallest, was fascinating in her naïve delight at everything that she saw, and it was hard not to smile when, after she had received the Communion (administered, according to the orthodox rite, in a spoon, and consisting of bread tintured with wine), she cried out, "Some more, please." After tea the elders came into the garden on a sad scene—Tania was pulling her brother's hair, and he was pounding his sister with all his might. This is not the base attempt of a scoffing unbeliever to discredit the Sacrament. Tolstoy, at the time he wrote that scene, was trying hard to believe and to conform. It tells us what we know must be the case with any ordinarily constituted family of young children when subjected to religious rites, whose significance they cannot appreciate. Nothing is really gained by the most orthodox sacramentalists pretending or imagining, that sacred rites produce

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on young children of average disposition, any assignable moral benefit. I remember being assured by a distinguished Churchman that he could trace the grace of baptism in his young child. Later on he and his wife asked me if I would care to mount the stairs, which were many, to the nursery? On the way my friend told me that his child was wonderfully brave. If he had a fall, or suffered any ache or pain, he would say: "Pray a little prayer, father." Entering the spacious, cheery apartment, we were soon engaged in giving the little fellow a swing which he vastly enjoyed until unluckily he fell off and hurt his head, though by no means seriously. I regret to say that the young Spartan greatly belied his parent's good opinion, for I never remember to have heard a child cry more lustily or show more temper. His father evidently wished he had not attempted to convince me of the palpable fruits of baptism in the case of his own child.

Once more returning to Kazan, and to Tolstoy's early experiences as a member of the Orthodox Church, it is necessary to observe that before receiving the Holy Communion it is necessary to make a confession of sin to the priest. Those who can dismiss from their minds all prejudice, may be able to admit that when confession is made by a young man to a Christian minister of sterling character,



and when, as in the Russian Church, the confessional is unaccompanied by the most objectionable features of the Romish system, the obligation of facing one's wrong-doings and wrong thoughts, and owning up to both, may prove a healthful and not a harmful one. Assuredly the exhortation of the monk in the prescribed words as reported by Tolstoy are such as to arrest thought and to lead a serious boy to helpful reflections. "Confess your sins without shame, secrecy or justification, and your soul shall be purified by God, but if ye conceal aught ye shall have the greater sin." Tolstoy tells us that he returned from that confession a pure and morally changed man, but remembering a shameful sin after his confession, that he had forgotten to mention to the priest, he decided to ride the next day to the monastery and confess it. Again the peace of God came to him as he listened to the quiet, melodious voice of the monk: "My son, may the blessing of our Heavenly Father be upon you, and may He preserve faith, peace and gentleness within you evermore. Amen." "I was then perfectly happy," he said. "Tears of bliss welled up in my throat."

As we have already learned the result of his Entrance Examination, we turn to the autobiographical novel to introduce us to the young student's feelings and actions when his status as student



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was assured. The first thing was to don the uniform. Everybody in any way connected with a government institution, wears a uniform in Russia. He recalls the sensations he experienced in grasping his first allowance of roubles for his private expenses, and in mounting his gig for the first time. Now he was freed for ever from nursery and school-room discipline. He was his own master. Like most young fellows in his position, he lost no time in making full proof of his freedom. He drove out to pay visits to such shops as specially ministered to the foibles and extravagances of the gilded youth of the period, spending money freely on all manner of decorative objects that he did not really want, not forgetting pipes and Turkish tobacco, with which latter acquisitions he went home at once and made such good use of them that he was soon staggering across the room to behold what manner of man he was in a mirror. Alarmed to find his face white as a sheet, he was at first so terrified that he was for sending for his family physician. Feeling better, however, he continued doing as others do, and dined that night at a fashionable restaurant with his brother and a friend. Abundant champagne, which, of course, accompanied his accession to man's estate, brought him low a second time on that memorable day. Only by fixing his mind steadfastly on hands and

feet was he able to control the movements of either.

Even under these noxious spells, and when under the morally enfeebling influence of excessive drinking, he refused to join in more culpable indulgences to which he was invited, and which apparently were regarded as equally his right now that he had become a man and a university student.

At the time his chief temptation was to affect the extravagances of the wealthy aristocratic set into which he was introduced. Are we surprised that this boy of sixteen did not at once escape from the dominion of the maxims and manners of his age and class? Naturally he felt as his comrades felt. He divided the world into two classes—into people who were *comme il faut*, and persons who were not *comme il faut*. He judged people more by their proficiency in French than by any higher standard. He judged them by their finger nails, their proficiency in dancing, by their manners; and, of course, a trace of accent in speech would be a fatal barrier to further intimate relationship between them and him. How persistent are these unwritten standards of worth and of propriety!

There worked in Tolstoy's mind and heart, in spite of inherited dislike of the manners of his humbler fellow-students, a real appreciation of their sterling

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qualities. He had to learn by a painful experience that many of these students who could not speak French or Russian without accent as he could, were yet vastly his superiors in general knowledge and capacity, and when he succeeded in so far setting aside prejudice as to share his preparation for an approaching examination with some of them, he was chagrined to notice that they not only treated him as an equal, but that while he was secretly disgusted by their dirty hands and bitten nails, they knew more of History and Philosophy than he did. He was more and more drawn to them by their genuine goodness of heart and by their jolly *camaraderie*. They were not *comme il faut*, and yet he respected them.

It remains to narrate the curious fact that for some probably not very serious offence, the nature of which has not been clearly stated, Tolstoy was locked up in the university prison together with a fellow-student with whom he passed on the whole a pleasant time. Thanks to his foresight in secreting a candle and candlestick, they spent a couple of days in friendly intercourse not at all disagreeably. His companion says that he fairly roared at Tolstoy's witticisms at the expense of the university, which he referred to as the "Temple of Science," and at his humorous caricatures of the Professors. But beneath these light-hearted pleasantries and sarcasms there

lurked a deeper feeling of dissatisfaction and disgust. He was beginning to feel that the place was doing him no good. "We both," said Tolstoy to his fellow-prisoner, "have a right to expect that we shall leave this Temple useful men, equipped with knowledge; but what shall we carry from the university? Think a little and answer your conscience. What shall we take from this Temple when we return home to the country? What shall we know how to do? To whom shall we be necessary?" "In conversation of this kind," says his companion, "we spent the night. Morning had hardly dawned when the door opened and the sergeant entered. He saluted us, and explained that we were free, and could retire to our respective homes."

Early in 1847, Tolstoy determined to quit the university, and he petitioned for leave to do so. Though he had not graduated, he received a somewhat curious lengthy testimonial, the purpose of which apparently was to mitigate the impression of failure suggested by the results of his university examinations. The certificate states that having passed over to the Faculty of Law, he made progress, which, in Logic and Psychology, was excellent. It is stated that his conduct also was excellent (nothing is said of his imprisonment), and he is further accorded certain privileges in the event of his entering the Civil Service, in spite of the fact that he had not graduated

## CHAPTER IV.

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### A Young Reformer.

WHY did Tolstoy leave the university? Are we to regard his change of life as evidence of a restless and unstable spirit? I think that the conversation between Tolstoy and his fellow-student in the university prison, reveals the working of his better self, of an eager, unquenchable desire and resolve not to lead unlaborious days. He felt that the university was not helping him, and that he was helping nobody. He tells us in the next great production of his pen, entitled, *A Russian Proprietor*, why he left Kazan, and under what influences he determined to betake himself to his ancestral home of Yasnaya Polyana. He felt more and more strongly urged to live for his peasant people there. That was the thing he saw clearly. He had responsibilities, which no absentee landlord could fulfil, towards the people of his estate. This is the vision that fascinated and impelled him. "To work for this simple, impressionable, uncorrupted people; to lift them from poverty; to give them pleasure; to give them education, which, fortunately,



I will use to correct their faults, which arise from ignorance and supersitition ; to develop their morals ; to induce them to love the right. . . . What a brilliant and happy future !” A further vision came to allure him : A happy married life in that rural peace, children—his own—making the old place ring again with prattle and laughter, life lived not for self, by compelling his peasants to raise his crops and fill his purse, but a life of beneficence and unremitting toil for the good of others. We may detect traces of a very youthful enthusiasm in this early dream of his, but who can deny that it was a high and holy one ? To his aunt, P. I. Yushkov, he communicated this momentous decision of his. “Is not my vocation,” he wrote, “clear and sacred, to labour for these seven hundred human beings for whom I must be responsible to God ?” He goes on to remind her that he does not need a university degree to be a good farmer.

But if we would understand the call which Tolstoy felt, to live *with* the people and *for* the people, we must try to gain clear views of the condition and needs of the Russian peasantry. It is not possible in this chapter, to enter into the causes which led to the gradual and disastrous tightening of the bonds which bound the Russian peasant to the soil, and which made



him a serf and not a free man. Peter the Great who did so much to civilise his country, and to accommodate its institutions to Western ideas and customs, rather increased than lightened the bonds of serfdom. Nothing indeed was done to better their condition until the memorable year 1861, when the well-meaning but too timid autocrat, the Emperor Alexander II., abolished serfdom by a stroke of his pen. It is essential to get a right understanding of the miserable condition of the peasantry in spite of this act of enlightened despotism. The first cause, one which emerges in every page of *A Russian Proprietor*—the story of a day spent on his estate among his peasant farmers—is that the Russian peasant farmer was, and still is, the worst farmer in Europe, and there can be no doubt that his inefficiency is due to his ignorance. It is hard for us in England to realise the condition of eighty millions of people, four-fifths of the entire population, being unable to read or write their native tongue. That is the condition of this large majority of Russian peasants, and how miserable their life commonly is! During the long winter there is little or nothing for the labourer to do. He lies lounging on his stove by day and night, and that long enforced idleness only serves to render him increasingly averse to labour when the time for toil comes. In summer-

time he enjoys nothing so much as to lie basking in the sun, as in the winter he lay dormant on his stove. The peasant is happy in his idleness if he can get just enough to keep body and soul together, if he can procure enough of his two luxuries, tea and *vodka*, to raise his spirits and to save him from depression. The Russian peasant, like his master, has a strain of Eastern fatalism and Eastern unconcern in his blood. His whole philosophy of life is summed up in the one word, *Nichevo*, forever on his lip's, and that means "*Don't worry.*"

The other reason is that the peasant has not sufficient land to make his farming pay, neither has he the will or the power to employ efficient agricultural implements. It is indeed a debated point whether the secret is lack of land or lack of method, but it is admitted that the peasant's harvest yields but one-third or one-fourth of the harvest of the landed proprietor, who has plenty of land, plenty of capital, and who employs up-to-date methods. The peasant has no capital, and can neither buy stock nor proper agricultural implements. To-day we are all familiar with the word *Duma*, the popular Assembly of Russia, but owing to the wide difference of conditions here and there, it is to be suspected that few Englishmen realise the attitude of the Russian peasant towards that

popular Assembly. Being uneducated and unused to a share in the government of his country, he looks at it simply and avowedly as a means for the amelioration of his position as a peasant farmer. He is not, as some imagine, indifferent. He is far more interested in its proceedings than an English peasant in an English Parliament. The fear is that he should look upon it with superstitious reverence and expect impossibilities from its working. The Russian peasants are not politicians, but they look to the Duma to give them land. The Duma, they think, exists to wipe away their fatal indebtedness (and they are all in debt to the Zemstvos or Provincial Councils) and to give them land enough to make their farming profitable.

It is to be feared that the peasant expects too much from the Duma, and that owing to his want of education and his fatal apathy, he is blind to the fact that, when the Duma has done its best, he will, like other people, have to work out his own social salvation. It is easy for foreigners to criticise a distant people whose temperament and whose institutions are widely different from those with which they are practically acquainted, but universal testimony compels us to believe in the immense stupidity of the Russian peasant—of the average peasant—though there are signs of improvement

during the last few years. By stupidity I mean that hitherto when worried and harassed by excessive taxation and by bad seasons, his one idea has been to burn down the house and granary of the nearest landowner, and this he does, not in badness of heart, but in sheer despair; not realising until it is too late, that he is destroying his own means of livelihood, robbing his own family of food for the winter, destroying also the seed by which a harvest next year could be realised. The truth is sad but simple. John Foster Fraser puts it thus: "There is only one thing the peasant sees ahead—the prospect of getting more and better land without having to pay for it. There his politics begin, and there they end."

And the peasant is not wrong. What he wants he must have, if Russia is to advance and hold her own among the nations of Europe. The peasant must have more land and the means of working it to advantage. But he himself must first be reclaimed and reformed. How is he to become other and better than he is? For one thing, he is habitually underfed. Scientific investigators assure us that the consumption of bread is thirty per cent. under the quantity necessary to preserve the vital force of an adult. Unhappily the peasant generally spends one-seventh of his income on *vodka*, and as the traffic in spirits is a national monopoly

it is estimated that the wretched peasant pays  $6\frac{1}{2}$  of this seven per cent. in duty. Can anything be imagined more wretched and wrong than the condition of the Russian peasantry? Nearly half his poor earnings are taken from him in the form of taxation, and that, as Tolstoy puts it—as he at least believes and contends—for purely imaginary benefits, for things he does not want and would be better without?

So, then, the abolition of serfdom, which was a wise and noble measure on the part of the Emperor Alexander, has produced poor results on account of heavy taxation, the incidence of poor harvests, and, worst of all, the sloth of the peasant himself, who does not understand the need of hard work, and whose mind has not been opened to appreciate the advantage of fresh methods, and of modern improvements in the management and culture of the land.

We may put it again. It is estimated that as the peasant has to pay forty-five per cent. in taxation and duties, he gives three days' work a week to the State. In his money difficulties he has recourse to the money-lender, to whom he generally owes one day's work a week. It results that he has to live and bring up his family on the work of the two remaining days in the week. However



it may be elsewhere, Russian politics are summed up in the Land Question. Nearly half the Russian peasantry are insufficiently supplied with land.

How to supply the people with land is the question of questions for all Russian statesmen; and it is one that absorbs the mind and fires the imagination of the people. A more radical question lies behind it. It is the question to the solution of which Tolstoy's later life has been given: Not only does Russia need better and more land for the people. Russia needs better people for the land.

This is the truth that Tolstoy learned by such hard and bitter experience when he settled with all the ardour of a youthful enthusiasm on his estate. I may quote his own words in *Anna Karenina*, written when his views of the problem of the working-people had had time to mature, and when he had outlived the idea with which he seems to have started, that "human nature is transformed when covered by a peasant's caftan." Their vices exasperated him as often as their virtues impressed him. For him, at that later period, the people represented the principal partner in a labour association, and, as such, he saw no need to make a distinction between the qualities, the faults, the interests of this association and those



of the rest of men. Like Mazzini, Tolstoy loves the working-people too well to be blind to their faults and to preach to them nothing but their "rights." Very frankly does Tolstoy confess in his early work, *A Morning of a Landed Proprietor*, that his first enthusiasm was chastened by bitter experience of the truth of what his aunt had assured him, when he revealed to her his dream of living for the peasant people, "that it is easier to make oneself happy than to make other people happy."

What can he do off-hand, for example, to improve the condition of *Churis* who lives contentedly in his fetid room not fourteen feet square, the ceiling of which hung down so that it threatened to fall in any moment? He had indeed built model cottages of stone where all reasonable conveniences were provided, but he saw in the stolid, obstinate face of the peasant that he was only too content to be where he was, and to grub along as his fathers had done before him. It was that expression of fatal obstinacy that more even than the miserable state of his dwelling, filled the young Barin's soul with hopelessness. Let the Barin kindly prop up the old place falling to pieces; but to live in cleanliness and in a ventilated cottage was more than he could face. If he were driven to the stone cottage—well, he knew

how to suffer as all Russian peasants do; but he would be driven from his hut as any other martyr is driven to his doom. The peasant's wife throws herself at his feet: "Do not destroy us, benefactor, you are our father, you are our mother. Where are you going to move us to? We are old folks, we have no one to help us." "Get up, pray," he answered. "What is the matter? If you don't wish to go you shan't. I won't compel you," he said, waving his hand and moving to the door.

His next call, and we may feel sure that these were typical experiences in the life of the young reformer, was even more distressing and depressing. Perhaps a description of the interior of the cottage as the Barin entered it, in the middle of a hot summer's day, will give some idea of the condition to which the peasant may fall, who has all the incentive of a home and croft of his own to work and do his best. "The whole hut, which was not fourteen feet square, was occupied by the stove with its broken pipe, a loom, which in spite of its being summer-time was not taken down, and a very filthy table made of a split and uneven plank. Although the situation was dry there was a filthy puddle at the door, caused by the recent rain, which had leaked through roof and ceiling. Loft there was none. It was hard to realise that this was a human habitation, such

unmistakable evidence of neglect and disorder was impressed upon both the exterior and the interior of the hovel ; nevertheless in this hovel lived Davidka Byelui and all his family." At the moment, notwithstanding the heat of the June day, Davidka, with his head covered by his sheepskin, was fast asleep, curled up on one corner of the stove. "Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself," began the Barin, "sleeping through the best part of the day, when you ought to be attending to your work when you haven't any corn?" And the peasant, as he gradually shook off his drowsiness, hung his head but said no word, his whole attitude seemed to say : "I know all about it ; beat me if you must. I will endure it." I think that the young Barin's argument with his slothful tenant is worth reproducing, for it goes to the root of the matter. "You must work, brother. What will become of you if you don't? Why have you no grain? Because your land is badly ploughed and not harrowed, no seed put in at the right time, and all from laziness. You asked me for grain. Well, let us suppose that I gave it you, so as to keep you from starving. Whose grain do I give you? Whose, do you think? Tell me," he persisted, "whose grain do I give you?" "The Lord's," muttered Davidka. "But where did the Lord's grain come from? Think for yourself. Who ploughed it? Who harrowed it?

Who planted, who harvested it? The peasants, hey? See now, if the Lord's grain is given to the peasants, then those peasants who work most will get most, but you work less than anybody, and yet you ask for more of the Lord's grain than all the rest. If all like you lay on their backs, the whole world soon would die of starvation. Brother, you've got to work. Do you hear, Davidka?" "I hear you," said the other slowly through his teeth.

The experiment was indeed a deep disappointment; I do not think we ought to call it a failure. At the close of his experiment he is still convinced that "love and self-sacrifice are the only true happiness, the only kind of happiness independent of circumstance." He was no doubt sorry to discover that he did not know how to benefit his fellow-creatures. He recognised at last the truth, that the peasants only laughed at his inexperience, that they were unwilling to receive the help he wished to give them, that they detested his new-fangled ways, and, worst of all, that they were sceptical of his high Christian sentiments. He failed in his endeavour, simply because he was a youthful experimentalist, simply because Yasnaya Polyana could not be transformed in a couple of years. I do not think he was wrong in his idea or in his method, in "the attempt to combine," as Merejkowski puts it, "the virtues of a

Lord Bountiful with those of the Gospel ;” but men like Churis and Davidka, in the story, are not taught to love cleanliness and ventilation and up-to-date implements and hard work in one year.

It was also in this obedience to the prompting of his heart to seek for happiness in the countryside, far from the artificial and exhausting gaieties of the town, that he learnt the joy of physical toil, and the happiness of working side by side with his peasant people, which he had consistently extolled during his long life, and which have contributed so much to his personal health and well-being. I will bring this chapter to a close by quoting one of the finest and most characteristic passages from *Anna Karenina* which, written ten years later, reproduces many of these his first experiences of fellowship with Nature and with simple people in their healthful toil. In this passage he describes his happy sense of being one with Nature in her inmost spirit of sweetness, calm and strength, when working side by side with his peasant people, mowing the fields from early morning till set of sun. He tells how the hard work in the fresh air and beneath the benignant influence of the brilliant sunshine carried him out of himself, laying a mysterious hand of healing on his heart, and how happy he was to share the midday meal of bread and beer, having no inclination to return



home to the elaborate fare prepared for him at home.

Little wonder if at first his unaccustomed muscles groaned and cried out against this prolonged labour, if his first furrows moved the skilled mowers to ill-concealed derision ; but soon he found himself doing good work and finding pleasure and delight in it. "The sweat in which he was bathed refreshed him, and the sun burning his back, his head and his arms, bared to the elbow, gave him force and energy. The moments of oblivion and unconsciousness of what he was doing, came back to him more and more frequently ; the scythe seemed to move of itself. These were happy moments. The longer Levine (Tolstoy) mowed, the more frequent the moments of oblivion, when his hands no longer wielded the scythe but the scythe seemed to have a self-conscious body, full of life, and carrying on, as it were by enchantment, a regular and systematic work. These were indeed joyous moments. It was hard only when he was obliged to interrupt this unconscious activity to remove a clod or a clump of wild sorrel. When mid-day came, he found the bread and beer so palatable that he decided not to go home for dinner. He dined with the *starik*. He felt as though the old man were more nearly related to him than his brother ; he could not help smiling at the feeling of sympathy which



this simple-hearted man inspired." Then with his encouragement, it was good to find that "the whole field, which in the time of serfdom used to take thirty-two men two days, was now almost mowed ; only a few corners with short rows were left. But he wanted to do still more ; the sun was sinking too early ; he felt no fatigue, he only wanted to do more rapid and better work."

## CHAPTER V.

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### At the Seat of War.

IN 1848 Tolstoy proceeded to St. Petersburg, where he passed what is known as the Candidates' Examination, but after a fresh trial,—and a very brief one sufficed,—of city life, he retired again to his country home, but at present utterly dissatisfied with himself and the world. Indeed, the next two years were spent in the somewhat disreputable society of an old German, Rudolph by name, with whom he gratified his love of music, which was his one ennobling delight during this period of reaction from the abortive efforts to reform his peasants. Beethoven was his best loved master, and it is well to remember that when he wrote his great critical work, *What is Art?* with its novel and audacious criticisms of Wagner and the modern stage, he was a man who knew whereof he affirmed. He wrote as a musician who had felt the subtle spells of the chief of the earlier tone poets. His brother Nicolay must have felt that he was wasting his life in the country, and that there was real danger lest Leo should waste his great gifts and settle down in contented idle-

ness, for idleness was, and is, the chief temptation of the Russian landed proprietor. English visitors who have been privileged to visit Russian country houses have not infrequently been astonished that men in vigorous health should, when devoid of intellectual hobbies, be content to live a purely animal life, living from day to day without any serious interest or work in life, content to take a lazy saunter through their estates, or to retire to their rooms and doze between meals. There was real peril for a moment lest Leo, disgusted with his failure as reformer, should have lost the zest of life and the sense of vocation. It was well that his brother, then Captain of the 4th Battalion of the 20th Artillery, succeeded in detaching him from the profitless life he was living in the country. The fact that he had lost more heavily at cards than he could afford to lose, had, no doubt, weight with him, and aided his determination to follow his brother, who was serving at the outposts, in the Caucasus.

How far he was at this early period from being of the heroic build will be gathered from a remark he made to his brother when they were staying at Kazan, *en route*. A gentleman was passing along the street in his jaunting-car, ungloved. "Evidently some boulder!" exclaimed Tolstoy. "Why so?" asked his brother. "Why! because he has no

gloves." "Why should you think him good-for-nothing, because he wears no gloves?" demanded Nicolay. His influence on Leo must have been good, for, aristocrat as he was, he helped to rid his brother of such prudish conventionalisms. They decided that they would travel together down the Volga to Astrakhan, and thence by post-chaise to their destination.

In order to understand his tales of the Caucasus and his adventures while with his brother, it is necessary to explain that the Russians, having driven the mountaineers to the south-west, it was necessary to hold them continually in check by a whole line of Cossack outposts on the left bank of the River Terek. For fifty years the struggle had been maintained, and still the fierce Georgian tribesmen threatened to break through the Russian lines. Tolstoy, be it remembered, was with his brother for the time in a purely private capacity. From Starogladovsk, where his brother was stationed, he wrote to his aunt: "I am feeling rather sad. I have seen at close quarters the life that Nicolay is leading." The fact was that he was soon homesick. The bracing air and healthy exercise had not had time to invigorate him, and he was dismayed by the dreariness of the scenery and the discomforts of camp-life. He did not stay there long, but, still in company with his brother, moved

on to a fortified camp erected for the shelter of the sick, where there were hot springs possessing remarkable healing virtues. Here Tolstoy was better pleased, and wrote to his aunt assuring her that he was well, and describing the beauty of the romantic scenery. Of the springs he wrote that they were so hot that they could boil eggs hard in three minutes. All the day the Tartar women came to wash their clothes with their feet—for the most part handsome and well-knit women they were. Sometimes, as he confessed, he would gaze for hours at these picturesque groups with the magnificent background of mountain scenery. At the same time he found the waters most beneficial in curing the rheumatism from which he had suffered.

The exquisite calm and beauty of the place began to work a healing influence on his spirit, and to appeal to his higher nature once more. One night the moonlight would not let him sleep, and a feeling of ineffable sweetness and elevation of heart possessed him. He repeated the old prayers well known to all Russians—not only the Paternoster, but the prayer to the Blessed Virgin, and the appeal to the guardian angel of his soul. And then the familiar prayers being ended, he found himself praying still in spirit, lifting up his soul to the Source of all the beauty round him. He felt himself longing, then

and there, for all that was sublime and noble and good, for a good beyond that which words can convey. He felt the Eastern longing to blend his being into the universal all-enfolding Being. He adds a thought which all who have had experience of God know well. He found himself asking pardon and feeling how needless the petition was—knowing in his happiness of soul, that what he longed for God had already given him.

With his unfailing candour he tells how, alas ! these spiritual emotions yielded afterwards to thoughts, tinged with earthly vanity and passion, so alien in moral import and yet strangely akin in emotional quality, to those which inspired his prayer ; and these stirrings of the lower self he seemed powerless to subdue.

The wonderful story, *The Cossacks*, reflects his own experiences in this district as he followed his brother from one outpost to another. It is the story of his own passion for a Cossack girl that he tells in the novel. Like all his other chief works of fiction it must be regarded as essentially autobiographical.

Rumours of his infatuation had reached Moscow, and thence he had received urgent and affectionate representations bidding him think of his position and not ruin himself and his prospects by a *mésalliance*.



But susceptible as he was, ever ready to turn with disdain and abhorrence from the fashionable world of marriage-making dowagers and marriageable girls, with their vacuous faces and simpering ways, he was captivated by the splendid grace and untainted freshness of Maryanka.

"I admired her as I admired the beauty of the mountains and of the sky, nor could I help admiring her, for she was as beautiful as they." In September of the following year he went with his brother to Tiflis, there to prepare for entrance into the army. He was induced to take this step by the Commander-in-chief, Prince Baryatinsky. But his real interest was centred in the scenery of this wild world, and in its hardy, adventurous people. Writing to his aunt he helps us to understand the feelings with which a young author contemplates his own first flights with the pen-feather. He was following advice given him by this same aunt who had long since detected his literary gifts. "I am following your advice," he writes, "and the occupations I am speaking of consist in literary work. I do not know whether what I write will ever see the light, but it is work which amuses me, and in which I have persevered too long to abandon it."

On 23rd December he writes to his brother Sergey :  
 "In a few days the long-desired announcement is to

be gazetted of my nomination as Volunteer Private in the 4th Battery." How far is he from realising as yet what he came afterwards to regard as the crime of war! Speaking of donning the uniform, he adds: "I will, according to my powers, contribute, by the aid of the cannon, to the slaughter of the *wild, rebellious Asiatics*." As the italics are his, there was no doubt a tincture of satire in the words.

In January, 1852, he returned to Starogladovsk a non-commissioned officer, and in February took part in a campaign.

On the 6th of September, an event of first-class importance in Russian literature occurred. On that day Tolstoy's first work, *Childhood*, appeared in print. He sent the work to the editor of the St. Petersburg *Contemporary*, and confesses that he was "silly with joy," when he received a somewhat formal critical estimate of his work in a letter accepting it for the Magazine. In a month's time a more appreciative epistle from Nekrassov, the editor, reached him. A third letter explained that in accordance with their custom he would receive nothing for a first story, but offering him fifty roubles (£5) for subsequent contributions of sixteen pages of printed matter. The tale was simply signed L. N. We have seen already that it was largely autobiographical, and members of his family were

astonished to find in the novel, which was being read with avidity on every hand, intimate details of their own life ; but their astonishment would have been still greater had they heard that their Leo was the author.

On 24th December of the same year, while waiting with impatience for his commission, which had been delayed owing to some inadvertence on his part in making application for it, he had to march against Shamyl, and in the *History of the 20th Artillery Brigade*, in a description of this campaign, we read : "At one of the guns of the chief detachment at No. 4 Battery, there acted as gunner, Count L. Tolstoy, afterwards author of the immortal works, *Felling Wood, The Cossacks, War and Peace*." He also took part in several other engagements, and was once within a hair's-breadth of being killed, shell bursting at his feet.

In the following year, 1853, war broke out between Russia and Turkey.

At this point we shall do well to take a glance at the state of Europe and the circumstances which brought about that war, and which incidentally meant for Tolstoy the exchange of his comparatively idle life at the Cossack outposts, for stirring historical scenes at Sevastopol. Nicholas I. of Russia was a great reactionary amid all the forces which were

working together to democratise Europe. He felt what, indeed, all the crowned heads of Europe felt at that time, that the principle of monarchy was at stake, and that the royal houses must stand or fall together. The sincere democrat must admit that democracy had done little for the peoples of Europe. Louis Napoleon was now well on his way to despotic power in France, while Italy was depressed and well-nigh crushed by wasteful extravagance and the burden of foreign garrisons. Poland had lost her independence. In Russia, indeed, things were not so far advanced. To Nicholas, the fate of a brother monarch was more than the welfare of his own people. He was, as Morfill says, "the great embodiment of autocracy and conservatism," who willingly lent himself to aid the Emperor of Austria in his struggle with the Magyars ; for by helping to crush the aspirations of Hungary, he was doing a service that no other could render to the cause of monarchy throughout the world. Little good, indeed, did he get of it, for he succeeded in winning the lasting hatred of the Magyars, and when, later on, his own army occupied the Danube provinces, the ingratitude of Austria was shown by the demand made, at the instance of Napoleon, for the withdrawal of his troops.

The condition and social needs of his own country seem scarcely to have entered the purview of this

autocrat. It was enough for him that the weaker his people became, the easier it was for him to exercise despotic power over them. No sovereign ever conceived legislation more retrogressive and restrictive. Laws were issued against heretics. He discouraged education by every means in his power, making it impossible for any large section of his people to send their sons to the national universities. He cut off communication between Russia and the outer world as far as he could, and made it well-nigh impossible for a Russian subject to cross the frontier. The reign of Nicholas meant the reign of tyranny, brutality and ignorance. Nothing tended more effectually to arouse in Tolstoy's mind the spirit of revolt against the class to which by birth he belonged than the subservience of that class to the Emperor, and the waste of its energies in fashionable gaieties, while they lived and grew slothful, on the earnings of an oppressed and neglected peasantry. And what appealed more and more convincingly to his mind was the fact that the aristocratic world, living in vicious idleness, lent all their influence to support the Emperor and a religion which had become a gilded prop of despotism. Moscow, that sacred city of golden domes and melodious bells, became to him increasingly a symbol of the forces which were crushing the very life out of the people.



Such, then, was the attitude of the Emperor, and such was the condition of his people. Let us recall as briefly as possible the circumstances which led to the outbreak of the Crimean War. There is no doubt that Russia had long regarded herself as heir to the decrepit power of Turkey; that holy Russia must grow and extend her dominions was the passionate conviction of the Russian people. That there mingled a strain of genuine, if barbaric, religious passion in this dream of Empire cannot be questioned. But for Russian protection, the intervening nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula must have been swallowed up by the Turk and have been persecuted into submission to Mohammedan rule.

We all know at this time of day, that Palmerston led England into a bloodthirsty and utterly unjustifiable war ostensibly to safeguard the "Holy Places of Jerusalem," and in "defence of oppressed nationalities," but in reality to withstand the expansion of Russia in the direction of Constantinople. Mr. Aylmer Maude has put the matter pithily in these words: "When some five hundred thousand men had perished, and about £333,000,000 had been spent, those who governed said it was time to stop. They forgot all about 'oppressed nationalities,' but bargained about the number and kind of ships



Russia might have on the Black Sea." Fifteen years later, when France and Germany were fighting one another, the Russian Government tore up that treaty, and the other governments then said that it did not matter. Later still, Lord Salisbury said that in the Crimean War we "put our money on the wrong horse." To have said so at the time the people were still engaging each other would have been unpatriotic. In all countries truth on such matters, spoken before it is stale, is unpatriotic.

War broke out in March, and it was resolved that the allied armies should invade the Crimea. Sevastopol was invested, and fire was opened on the town on the 17th of October. Eight days later occurred that celebrated charge of the Light Brigade of which the best thing said was: "*C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*" Tolstoy, who was present at the disaster at Silistria, proceeded to the Crimea, and joined the besieged army in Sevastopol. There, exposed to the imminent perils of the siege, he calmly wrote his *Sketches*, of which it is not too much to say, that though written before the advent of the newspaper correspondent at the front, they have never been surpassed, probably have never been equalled, as vivid, truthful pictures of war as seen by an actual combatant. So great was the impression everywhere produced by these lurid and thrilling,

and often pathetic descriptions, that the Emperor Nicholas issued special orders that "the life of this young man be guarded." It is interesting, by the way, to learn that in December, before the outbreak of the war, Tolstoy had asked his brother to buy for him when in Moscow, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, and to send him an English dictionary. He adds, in view of the perils in store for him, and as the issue of all his religious reflections during the comparative retirement of Cossack life, that for all other prayers he had substituted this single one—"Our Father." In August he led his battery at Chernaya, and after the capitulation of Sevastopol he was chosen, probably on account of his literary ability, to draw up a military report, and to carry it to St. Petersburg. Much has been made by various writers, of Tolstoy's eager desire for the coveted distinction of the St. George's Cross. He should, in fact, have been decorated, but ill luck, and, it must be confessed, his own folly, prevented his receiving the Cross, for after an engagement, in which he had had an honourable share, several Crosses were distributed, but he was at the time under arrest for being out after regulation hours. A second time he failed, on an occasion when there were too few decorations to go round. The Colonel, a personal friend of his, gave him the opportunity, which with his usual generosity he

embraced, of yielding his right to an old soldier who would, in all probability, have no other chance of winning it.

It is interesting to remark that in St. Petersburg he was the guest of the celebrated novelist, Turgeniev, with whom he had a most unfortunate and unseemly quarrel. The story of it is entirely unedifying, and, like so many similar disagreements, was really founded on incompatibility of temper, and the only further reference that I shall make to it will be in connection with a very noble letter which his great contemporary addressed to Tolstoy, when he besought him to abandon philosophic and religious writing for what he regarded as his true vocation as a novelist. Nothing is more baffling in recalling the story of Tolstoy's early years than the repeated outbreak of a spirit of dissipation against which all the nobler instincts of his manhood rebelled. So was it during the time of his stay at St. Petersburg, where, as a young and brilliantly successful writer bringing the latest reliable news from the theatre of war, he was everywhere received with cordiality, and Turgeniev, who looked with the eye of indulgent humour on his excessive gaieties, tried to dissuade him from them. He is still a thorough man of the world, living the life of the world, and not disdaining the latest fashions. He was noticeable in the streets of St. Petersburg

with "his padded overcoat with grey beaver collar, long, carefully-tended brown hair and fashionable cane"; and as at the time it was the thing to spend an hour every day in the Gymnasium, there he was to be seen in athletic costume, trying to jump the wooden horse without touching the wool-stuffed leather cone on its back. Then in the evening he was ready for the ball or other social entertainment. And this was the period of his first successful literary efforts. While still with the army he finished the *Memorials of Childhood*, and published, *A Morning of a Landed Proprietor*. Later in the same year (1852) he wrote a plan of his novel, *The Cossacks*. In 1854 he wrote *Boyhood*, and in 1855 *Sevastopol in December* and *Sevastopol in May*. In the following year he completed his work by bringing down the record to the August of 1855. His literary activity during that year included, besides his collected military stories, the *Two Hussars*, and the third part of the Memoirs of his early days, entitled *Youth*,—a remarkable output indeed! But it is to the realism of his sketches of the war that I would, before closing this chapter, draw my readers' careful attention. I have said that his descriptions of the horrors of the war were something new in the world of literature. Not only were they the first artistic portrayal of the actual occurrences of a great war by a

participant in the struggle, but they may be regarded as the precursors of modern realistic novels. Never before had war been described as he dared to describe it in all its naked horror, long before the days when daily newspapers sent their special correspondents to the front. "There you see doctors with their blood-stained elbows, their pale, stern faces, busied about a cot, on which, with eyes widely opened, and uttering, as in delirium, incoherent, sometimes touching, words, lies a wounded man under the influence of chloroform. The doctors are busy with their repulsive but beneficent work of amputation. You see the sharp, curved knife enter the healthy white body; you see the wounded man suddenly regain consciousness with a piercing cry and curse; you see the army surgeon fling the amputated limb into a corner." Or here are the reflections of a man just before the shell bursts that is to take his life: "Which will be killed, Mikhailov or I, or both together? And if it is I, where will it strike? If in the head, then all is over with me; but if in the leg, they will cut it off, and I shall be sure to ask them to give me chloroform—and I may still remain among the living. But perhaps it will not burst," he thought, and with the decision of despair, he tried to open his eyes. But at that instant, through the crevice of his eyelids, his eyes were smitten with a red fire, and something struck



him in the centre of the breast with a frightful crash. He ran off, he knew not whither, stumbled over his sword, which had got between his legs, and fell over on his side. He groaned so terribly that it frightened him to hear himself. Then more red fires flashed in his eyes, and it seemed to him as though the soldiers were laying stones on him. He exerted all his strength to cast off the stones; he stretched himself out and no longer saw or heard or felt anything. He had been killed on the spot by a splinter of shell in the middle of the breast."

Such experiences—and in sympathetic imagination he went through these terrible experiences of the maimed and the dying—were among the goads that pricked him on to his life-work. Here, in these sketches of war, we have none of the cant of conventional patriotism, no appeal to the sentiments which fan the flame of hatred of men of other nationalities (even Plato praised the Athenians for their "heart-felt hatred of the foreign nature"), but a deliberate, unshrinking determination to let the world know what war means. He began to realise what a colossal crime war is. This the peasants, driven to wars against foreign peasants with whom they have no quarrel, have always known, and today the *Voinskaja Povinnost* is the most dreaded ordeal in life for the Russian peasant. There mothers and



fathers, wives and sons are gathered, with white, haggard faces, waiting the awful arbitrament of the lot. There at a table officers are seated, and in front of the table is a barrel-shaped box with an opening at the top. Now for the grim game whose stakes are human lives! The young men file past, dip their hands into the box, and, according to the number drawn, their fate is decided, whether for a life of peaceful industry or one of hardship, possible mutilation, and, strange to say, dishonour—for the returned soldier is a man whom all shun for the vices he will certainly have acquired, and whom none will employ because he has become incapable of any reasonable and useful work. What do the authorities give him to start life with? A beggar's certificate—the right to beg and to be a nuisance in the world—to be cursed and cuffed at the church door—this is the reward bestowed by holy Russia on her maimed, disabled sons when they come home from the wars.

The sword pierced Tolstoy's heart, and we may feel assured that the awful experiences of his life in the Caucasus and before Sevastopol, awakened in his soul a life-long passion of indignation against war as the greatest of all the crimes of man against man.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### Foreign Travel.

TOLSTOY is not by any means the only man who has been driven abroad by the unhappy termination of a love-affair. On leaving St. Petersburg on the termination of the war, he first stayed a few days in Moscow on his way to Yasnaya Polyana. From his old home he wrote to his future brother-in-law, Dr. Bers, that he was "a little in love." With whom, he said, "I will tell you later." In November, 1856, he was again in the capital, and on the 26th of that month he finally retired from military service. It was in Moscow that he had been struck by the daughter of a landowner, a neighbour of his own. The result was a mutual attachment. It is not necessary to relate the events of this courtship at any length, for the young lady proved utterly unsuitable in every way to such a man as Tolstoy, and we can but reflect in passing that his career would in all probability have been spoiled had he allied his life with hers. She was beautiful and, as he shortly discovered, a flirt, a woman of mean intelligence, incapable of any real and deep attachment, or

of any vital sympathy with his views of life. In one of his letters he expresses something like despair at finding how unworthy were the objects that chiefly interested her. He is not afraid, as he would have been had he been sincerely in love, to jeer at her gaieties, at the ceaseless round of balls, parades, festivities, flirtations with *aides-de-camp* which made up her life. After a two months' interchange of letters he shows how little he is in love by suggesting a temporary separation; but while at Yasnaya Polyana he learnt that "his charming girl," allowed her music-teacher, Mortier, to make love to her, and that her affection for him, which appears to have been as genuine as anything of which she was capable, was not thought to be incompatible with another less serious attachment. This was a terrible shock to Tolstoy, who wrote her a letter full of expostulation and of reproach. When he discovered later on that she still continued to hold relations with Mortier, he was mortally wounded in his affection for her, and although he allowed the correspondence to continue a while, he confessed to his aunt, in a letter written on the 5th December of the same year, that his love had grown cold. It was this abortive love-affair which induced him to leave Russia and to see something of the west of Europe.

"Dear Aunt," he wrote, "I have received my passport for abroad. . . . You probably understand dear aunt, why I do not wish to come to Yasnaya now, or rather to Sudakovo, and even ought not to do so. I think I have behaved very badly in relation to V., but by seeing her now, I should behave yet worse still. As I have written to you, I am more than indifferent to her, and fear I can no longer deceive either myself or her. Whereas if I came, I might perhaps, owing to weakness of character, again deceive myself. . . . No one has taken my fancy during these two months, but I have simply come to see that I was deceiving myself, and that I not only have never had, but never shall have, the slightest feeling of true love for V. The only thing that greatly pains me, is that I have injured the young lady, and that I shall not be able to take leave of you before my departure. I intend returning to Russia in July, but should you desire it, I will come to Yasnaya to embrace you, for I shall have time to get your answer in Moscow."

Tolstoy was able to get away at the beginning of the year 1857, having written to "V." a last penitent letter, thanking her for her friendship, and wishing her happiness.

After all the curious, varied vicissitudes of his early life, what manner of man was Tolstoy?

I think that by this time he had finally renounced the life of the city. *That* he could not endure. He loathed its unreality, and looked back with sincere regret on his own share in its empty and corrupting gaieties. He looked back on a short career at Kazan University with equal dislike and with some approach to mortification, as he recalled the high hopes of personal distinction with which he had commenced his student life, and the barren results that he had attained. The next enterprise was even more a source of poignant sorrow and disillusionment. The project of being "little father," in deed and not merely in name, to his own peasants had inspired him with dreams of a long, happy life among his own people, lived entirely for their good. The dream was indeed destined to be realised, but only under new conditions, and in the strength of a long experience of the rough side of life. From that failure, as we have seen, he turned, thwarted and humiliated, to the freedom and excitement of a soldier's life. By the time the war was over, he had conceived a profound horror of legalised slaughter, and was as sick of military glory as of the fashionable idleness of St. Petersburg. At this time he had one ambition and one legitimate source of satisfaction—his ever-growing fame as a writer. "Sometimes," Bers tells us, "he would say jocosely, that he had not won his way to



be a General of artillery, but he had become a General in literature," and here his relative is candour itself regarding his attainments and his position and prospects. He tells us that "Petersburg had never pleased him, that he had no power to take a distinguished place in the highest circles, and that his fame as a writer was not firmly established, and that, for the rest, he had neither great wealth nor official position."

The early part of the year was occupied by travel in Germany, in France, and in Switzerland.

In Paris the experience that made deepest impression on his sensitive spirit was a public execution. "The guillotine for a long time prevented me from sleeping," he wrote. From Paris he journeyed to Geneva, and from the little village of Clarens he wrote to his Aunt Tatiana:

"I have just received your letter, dear aunt, which found me, as you must know by my last letter, in the neighbourhood of Geneva, at Clarens. I will not attempt to describe the beauty of the country, especially at the present time, when all is in leaf and flower. I will merely say that it is literally impossible to tear oneself away from this lake and these shores, and that I pass most of my time in gazing and admiring as I walk about, or else merely as I sit by the window in my room. I am really happy, and I begin to feel the advantages of having been born



with a silver spoon in my mouth. There is here a charming society of Russians, Pushkins, Karamzins and Mescherskys; and all, God knows why, have taken affectionately to me. I feel this, and the month I have passed here so pleasantly, and am so well and hearty, that I am quite in low spirits at the thought of leaving."

It is curious to listen to his description of Lucerne, evidently little known at that time of day by Russians. After telling his aunt of his intention, if he could screw up courage, to cross the channel, and to visit England, returning to Russia by the Mediterranean, Constantinople, the Black Sea and Odessa, he proceeds: "I have arrived at Lucerne. It is a town in the north of Switzerland, not far from the Rhine, and I am already postponing my departure so as to remain a few days in this delicious little town." It was in connection with this stay that he wrote the pathetic tale *Lucerne*. He was wrought to a fine pitch of indignation by the selfishness and stiff, heartless proprieties of the English visitors who almost monopolised the lovely town and its hotels. He rebelled against the pettiness of the tourists amid the colossal grandeur of Nature, whose calm spaces and snowy summits seemed evermore to speak of God, and to invite to high and great thoughts and views of life.

What he writes must, as he tells us, be regarded as a transcript from an actual experience of his while staying at the Schweitzerhof Hotel. No better, truer picture of a vast and sumptuous abode of pleasure could be found anywhere than that contained in the sketch entitled *Lucerne*. On 19th July a wandering minstrel played his guitar for half an hour outside the hotel. About a hundred people listened, and possibly enjoyed the music. Not one gave him anything. Many made sport of the poor fellow. There and then, the soul of Tolstoy was stirred within him. All his native contempt for idle, useless and disdainful wealth and rank made themselves felt in his soul. He describes the frigid, soulless decorum of the English guests, and in his description we remark one of many indications of the impression produced on the Russian aristocrat by a perfection of toilet and manner not as yet assimilated in Russian society. "On all sides gleamed the whitest laces, the whitest collars, the whitest teeth, natural and artificial, the whitest complexions and hands, and with it all no soul-felt emotion. In the evening, after dinner, the little travelling Tyrolese played and sang. . . . Those voluptuous, soft chords of the guitar, that sweet, gentle melody, and that solitary figure of the man in black amid the fantastic environment of the lake,

the gleaming moon, and the twin spires of the cathedral rising in majestic silence, and the black tops of the poplars, all was strange and perfectly beautiful, or at least seemed so to me." Three times the humble artist made his appeal after his performance. Not one of the brilliant throng of listeners threw him a penny. The crowd laughed heartlessly at its own inhumanity, and at the discomfiture of the artist, who seemed to Tolstoy to shrink into himself, as he took his instrument in one hand and, lifting his cap with the other, said : "Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you and wish you a good-night." Tolstoy followed the man, and in spite of the indignation of the waiters and guests took him as a friend among the haughty throng, and perhaps in a somewhat theatrical and conscious manner ordered "Champagne — the very best."

It needed but the stimulus of a pathetic incident like the one related, to appeal with arresting and awakening power to the inner man of the heart, in Tolstoy. He felt what others of his rank did not feel. He was ready even then to wage war against the selfish coldness of the class to which by birth he belonged. And he himself began to be aware of the significance and trend of his own emotions. "This," he adds, "is not an invention, but an actual fact, as those who desire can authenticate by consulting the

papers for the list of those who were at the Schweitzerhof on the 19th of July. This is an event which historians of our time ought to describe in letters of inextinguishable flame. This event is more significant, more serious, fraught with far deeper meaning, than the facts which are printed in newspapers and histories."

Of his visit to England, unfortunately, we have the slightest record. One solitary fact of interest is recorded. "He saw in the House of Commons, Lord Palmerston sitting with his hat pushed over his eyes all the time that a member of the opposition was thundering against the ministry, and then quietly rising, proceed, in a speech of some two or three hours' length, to demolish one by one all the arguments of his opponent."

This time of travel was one during which the seeds of religious thought and purpose were germinating. He was gaining sympathy with the world of the suffering and the toil-worn. He was not satisfied with the world even while under the dominion of the characteristic optimism of the age which ushered in the period of scientific achievement. He felt certain that "no theory of the wisdom of all created things, nor of progress, could justify such an act" as that of which he tells in *Lucerne*. Hence he learnt to think that a man must judge of what is right, not

by what men do or did, not by progress, but by some inner teaching and standard of the human heart.

On his return he is naturally full of the business of his estate. The interval between his first and second tour is chiefly interesting on account of a visit which the poet Fet paid to Yasnaya. The visitor gives a charming picture of his Aunt Tatiana Yergolsky, who received him with old-fashioned hospitality, an old lady not absorbed by the past, but full of eager interest in the present, and devoted to her nephew.

Evidently things were somewhat behind hand in Russia in the country, and the old lady had much to learn regarding the more recent achievements of physical science. Driving with Tolstoy and his aunt to Tula in the autumn, the latter suddenly asked, as she looked outside the carriage window at the recently erected telegraph posts and wires: "*Mon cher Leon*, how is it people write their letters by telegraph?" Tolstoy had to explain as simply as possible the action of a telegraph instrument, similarly arranged at both ends of the wire, and as he was concluding, I heard her say, "*Oui, oui, je comprends, mon cher.*" Having kept her eyes fixed on the wire for half an hour, she at length asked: "*Mon cher Leon*, how can this be? For a whole



half-hour I have not seen a single letter pass along the telegraph." These were truly happy days spent with the aunt who was so deeply attached to him, and whom he loves so tenderly. He speaks of her "wonderful, universal kindness to everyone without exception." He could not recall any one instance in which she got angry, or said a rough word, or condemned anyone harshly. "She never in words taught one how one should live; she never moralised. All her moral work was worked out within her, and externally appeared only in deeds—indeed not deeds—there were none of these, but all her peaceful, humble, submissive life of love, not an agitated, self-admiring passion, but a quiet, unobtrusive love."

It is impossible to over-estimate the influence for good which this noble and pious lady exercised over the mind and character of Tolstoy. For some of us it stands for an ideal of real but modest and unpretentious goodness. I simply do not know any life more worthy of being held up as an example to Christian women. She never hurt anyone; she tried daily to help and gladden other lives. No one knew her who did not love her. And what is perhaps most noteworthy, she never talked about religion, or made religious professions. As to Church doctrine, she accepted all that she had been taught with one characteristic exception: the



dogma of everlasting punishment she did not believe, and would not profess to believe it. This was one of her sayings : "*Dieu qui est la bonté même, ne peut pas vouloir nos souffrances.*" It was only by some special affability of manner, by a certain radiant graciousness and tenderness of manner and word that Tolstoy knew that he had, in entering her room, interrupted her at prayer.

During Fet's visit, Tolstoy nearly lost his life in a bear hunt. The bear rushed at him, and he was compelled to fire when at a distance of not more than six yards. His first shot missed ; by his second the brute was mortally wounded, but with power left to rush at his assailant, knock him down, and while his friends were rushing to his assistance, to bite him above and below the eye. He probably saved his life by pressing his head, as he lay, deep into the snow, so that the bear's teeth were buried first in his fur cap. He made light of the event in writing to his aunt, but it was a perilous adventure that nearly proved fatal.

All this while Tolstoy's friends were watching him with curious interest and concern. His strongly-developed individuality, together with his resolute will, assured them that he was a man who would go far. Turgenev's comment at the period is the criticism of a far-seeing, shrewd man of the world. "Leo

Tolstoy still goes on in his queer way. Such is evidently his destiny. When will he make his last summersault and stand on his feet?"

In 1860 Tolstoy set off once again on foreign travel. The illness of his brother Nicolay, who had gone abroad in search of health, and who was now almost at death's door, hastened his departure. At the same time he determined, while in Germany, to make a very special study of different theories and methods of education. He had already made himself acquainted with Russian schools. "Now," he says in his *Confessions*: "I went abroad a second time in order there to learn how I could manage to teach others without knowing anything myself," by which words he meant in his ironical and pungent way to express his opinion that it is much more important to have something to say than to study how to say it, to possess knowledge than to theorise as to the best way of communicating it. In Berlin, accordingly, he attended university lectures in History and in Physiology, joining certain admirable evening-classes, established for the instruction of working-men who came with their own questions which they placed in "query boxes" provided for the purpose. Tolstoy remarked recently that such an admirable idea could not, after an interval of forty years, be carried out in Russia, for

the police and the clergy together would not tolerate such intimate and friendly intercourse between the artisan and the leading university professors. On the other hand, he was disgusted at what he saw at Leipzig. The teaching seemed to him hopelessly antiquated, formal and uninspiring to children. "It was really dreadful," he said. They taught the children long prayers for the King; everything had to be learned by heart, with whippings in store for those who did not memorise correctly. They were frightened and mentally and morally distorted children. In Kissingen he met Froebel, the German sociologist, and nephew of the celebrated educationalist, and there it was that he came to realise that education, once started on rational lines, would produce better results than in Germany, simply because Germany was hampered and hindered by a long tradition of bad teaching and by false methods, whereas the Russian peasantry had been taught nothing. Their minds were unperverted. In the meantime his brother Nicolay's health had not improved, and in August he accompanied him to Hyères, on the Mediterranean. On 20th September he wrote to his beloved aunt:

"DEAR AUNT,—The black seal will tell you. All that I have been expecting from hour to hour for a

fortnight has happened to-day, at nine in the morning. Only yesterday evening did he, for the first time, allow me to help him to undress. This morning, for the first time, he returned to bed and asked for a nurse. He was conscious the whole time. A quarter of an hour before his death he drank some milk and told me he felt well. This morning he even joked and showed interest in my plans of education. Only a few minutes before death he murmured several times: 'My God, my God!' I think he felt his position, but deceived us and himself. . . . I have only just closed his eyes. I shall now soon be with you and personally relate everything to you. I do not think of bringing back his body. The Princess Galitzin has undertaken to arrange everything concerning the burial. Good-bye, dear aunt, it is the will of God. That is all. I am not now writing to Sergey. He is probably now out hunting; you know where. So inform him or send him this letter."

The death of his beloved Nicolay made a profound impression on his mind and heart. In some respects Tolstoy is the modern representative of the ancient monastic piety. He is mediæval in his view of death. Death did not present itself to him as it does to some souls enamoured of the beauty of God and the joys of eternity. Death was not to him a

"covered way that issues into light." The clue to his religion is rather his deep ineradicable consciousness of the opposition of flesh and spirit. Death loomed large in his thoughts; it meant for him a perpetually renewed tragedy, the insoluble mystery and misery of our existence. In this, as in all else, he is dominated and mastered by impressions of sense. In the Hotel at Lucerne he is haunted by the vision of whiteness, white skin, white nails, white linen. Now once more it is the whiteness of death that appals him. No outward appearance is trivial or insignificant. On the whole, Nature is for him symbolic of death and not of life.

"Alles vergängliche  
Ist nur ein gleichniss."

In this respect he differs from his great contemporary John Ruskin, who in a passage, which I regard as the supreme expression of the grounds of a reasonable hope of immortality and of better things to come, says: "But if loving well the creatures that are like yourself, you feel that you would love still more dearly creatures better than yourself—were they revealed to you; if striving with all your might to mend what is evil, near you and around, you would fain look for a day when some Judge of all the earth shall wholly do right, and the little hills rejoice on every side;



if parting with the companions that have given you all the best joy you had on earth, you desire ever to meet their eyes again, and clasp their hands—where eyes shall no more be dim, nor hands fail; if preparing yourself to lie down beneath the grass in silence and loneliness, seeing no more beauty, and feeling no more gladness, you would care for the promise to you of a time when you should see God's light again, and know the things you have longed to know, and walk in the peace of everlasting love, then the hope of these things to you is religion, the substance of them in your life is faith."

We have already remarked upon Tolstoy's misery in the presence of death. It was not so much the loss of the beloved dead that oppressed him, as the death chamber itself, and above all, the horrible marks of decay and putrescence. One might fill pages with recurring expressions of this shrinking from the contemplation of death and of his loathing of it. "Illness and death," he says in *My Confession*, "would come, if not to-day, then to-morrow, to those I loved, to myself, and nothing would remain but stench and worms." Ruskin shared this deep horror and aversion. "I will attend no more funerals," he once wrote, "until I attend my own"; but in his case, the misery of physical dissolution was



obliterated by a joyful sense of life overcoming death.

In his great work *Anna Karenina*, this supreme realist has recorded his own painful impressions in witnessing his brother's death. Who in the whole range of literature has dwelt so unflinchingly on the sordid and repulsive aspects of death as he? He tells us that he had been prepared to pity his brother in the last stage of consumption—but what was this? A body lightly covered by a counterpane. Stretched out upon the latter was a hand, huge as a rake. . . . The head resting on the pillow showed the thin hair glued with perspiration to the temples, and an almost transparent brow.

“Can it be that this horrible body is my brother Nicolay?” thought Levine, but as he came near, the doubt ceased. It was enough to glance at the lively eyes turned towards him as he entered, or the motions of the mouth under the long moustache, to recognise the frightful truth *that this corpse was indeed his brother.*

We must not indeed attribute to Tolstoy to-day all the sentiments of the time under review, but unquestionably they reflect the temperament of the man. They reveal his instinctive attitude towards death, and whatever gleamings of hope we may hereafter detect in his Christian writings, we realise

how serious a struggle it was, and probably still is, for him to credit any life on the other side of death. The external world is not for him, and never has been, the symbol and sacrament of a diviner life.

On 17th October he wrote to Fet:—

“It seems to me that you already know what has happened. On 20th September he died, literally in my arms. Nothing in my life has made such an impression upon me. He was right when he said that there was nothing worse than death. And when you come to think of this, that it is after all the end of everything—there is nothing worse than life. Why worry and try if, from what was Nicolay Nicolae-vitch Tolstoy, nothing is left for him? He did not say that he felt the approach of death, but I know that he watched every step and knew for certain what was still ahead. A few minutes before his death he dozed off, and suddenly he awoke, and in terror whispered: ‘What is this?’ He had seen it—his absorption into nothingness; and he did not find anything to hold on to. What shall I find? Still less. Certainly neither I nor anyone else will, up to the last moment, struggle with it as he did.”

It was the winter of his spiritual discontent. These clear-cut, forceful words about death have a certain helpful astringency. They recall the

memorable protest of Rathbone Greg in his *Enigma of Life*. He refused to cry "Peace, peace," when there was no peace. He would be true to his darkness as well as to his light. We might have expected Tolstoy to have found his place among those who find a refuge from the horror of the grave in the revelations of spiritualism. Not so: from spiritualism he has always recoiled. It represents an order of thought or speculation supremely distasteful to him. Perhaps the advocates of this belief or credulity, would say that his prejudices have always been too strong to permit him to give to spiritual phenomena a fair and unbiased consideration. Certain it is that not less than Browning, he refuses to recognise, in pretended phantoms of the dead, any clue to another life on the other side of death.

To Mr. John Coleman Kenworthy he wrote as recently as 11th January, 1902:—"I cannot help saying that I am sorry for the importance that you attach to spiritualism. Your true and pure Christian faith and life are much more reliable than all that the spirits can say to you." Referring to this letter Mr. Kenworthy remarks: "For him, materialism and annihilationism are conquered by his own inner victory over the animal nature; life has expanded beyond the bounds of mortality, and sweeps about him a sunlit space, the dwelling-place of the spirit

for ever. He has the inward assurance born of devotion to goodwill and truthfulness, which is the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," whereas, to the writer, a "world of spirit" is not merely a sure hope; it is an ascertainable fact.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### Marriage.

TOLSTOY returned from his third journey abroad in the year in which the serfs were liberated, 1862. On his return he was appointed to the office of Peace-arbitrator, which may be said, roughly, to correspond with that of a county magistrate, but with larger powers. Indeed he began at this time to live the life of a country gentleman as it is understood in Russia, occupying himself chiefly with the schools and his duties as magistrate. Naturally he did not find the magistracy a bed of roses. He was too far in advance of his brother arbitrators to work harmoniously with them. His avowed sympathy with the peasants, and his dislike of aristocratic exclusiveness, brought him again and again into trouble with his brother magistrates, who had done their best, on account of his well-known democratic sympathies, to prevent his appointment. They stood, as the county magistrates in England stood fifty years ago, for the forces of conservative reaction. Writing to the Minister of the Interior, the Governor of the Province wrote: "I have the honour to remark that

what gave rise to the present correspondence was the appointment of Count L. Tolstoy as a Peace-Mediator of the Krapivensky district, contrary to the opinion of the marshals of nobility, both of the Province and of the district, who object to his election on the alleged ground that he is disliked by the local nobility. Being acquainted with Count Tolstoy and knowing him for a well-educated man, and one in great sympathy with the present reform, and taking also into consideration the expressed desire of the landowners of the Krapivensky district to have him as their Peace-mediator, I cannot replace him by a person quite unknown to me, the more so as Count Tolstoy was pointed out to me by your Excellency's predecessor, among other persons, as one enjoying the best reputation.

“LIEUTENANT-GENERAL DAROGAN.”

In constituting himself the champion of the liberated serfs he committed himself to a struggle which was not only the source of perpetual harass, but which proved to be an impossible one—for on the bench of magistrates he stood alone, thwarted at every turn, unable to give effect to his views, and doomed again and again to have his actions overruled by others. A single example, one of many, will suffice to show how he spent his time in unavailing championship of



the rights of the peasantry. Part of a certain village had been burnt down, and the local landlords refused to permit the peasants to rebuild on the spot, ordering them to migrate to a distance, and at the same time declining to afford them such compensation for their losses as would enable them to carry out their arbitrary injunction. Tolstoy, of course, took their part, appealing to the local nobility to aid them, and when they refused, appealing to one Court of Justice after another, but with no satisfactory result. In another case a landowner took forcible possession of his peasants' holdings by declaring them "household servants," a class not included in the act of Liberation. In this case Tolstoy succeeded in securing their holdings for them, and in resisting an act of barefaced tyranny which, but for his intervention, would have passed unchallenged ; but the opposition to him personally, and to his decisions, was so continuous, and his work was so hampered by the ill-will and opposition of his brother magistrates, that his health seriously suffered, and on 26th May he was forced to resign his office. He says in his *Confession* that he was harassed to death, and that his work as arbitrator was "one continual struggle." The death of his brother Nicolay still preyed on his imagination, and he began to fear that he himself would succumb to the same disease—consumption—that had carried him off. "I fell ill,"

he writes, "more with mental than with physical sickness, gave up everything, and started for the Steppes to breathe a fresher air and to drink mare's milk and live a mere animal life."

With startling suddenness comes the announcement of his return to Yasnaya, and of his marriage. Tolstoy was at this time a frequent visitor at the house of Dr. Bers, who had married one of his own girl friends, but who was now the mother of three attractive daughters. Bers himself was a man of culture and of fine old-world courtesy, his wife a beautiful and distinguished-looking brunette who evidently managed the household. His sister-in-law describes in a private letter the relations of the two families, which were, she says, of "long standing." "Our grandfather, Ispenef, and Tolstoy's father were neighbouring landowners, as well as personal friends. Their families had been in constant communication, and it is through this that my mother and Tolstoy were like sister and brother in their childhood. He used to call on us when he was an officer. My mother was then already married, and on very friendly terms with Tolstoy's sister, and at their house, as a child, I often met Tolstoy. He used to get up all sorts of games with his nieces and myself. I was about ten at this time, and have but little recollection of him. When he returned from abroad,

in the year of his marriage (this appears to be a slip, for his marriage occurred in the following year, in September, 1862), he had not seen us for several years, and coming to Pokrovskoye he found my two elder sisters already grown up. He brought with him a teacher, Keller, from abroad, and engaged a few more teachers from Moscow for his school, which occupied his attention very much. He almost always came on foot to Pokrovskoye. We went out with him for long walks. He took great interest in our life, and became very intimate with us. Once we, my mother and we three sisters, went for a fortnight to grandfather's country place in the Province of Tula, of course driving, and he joined our company. On the way we called at Yasnaya Polyana. He lived with his Aunt Alexandrovna Yergolsky and his sister Marie, who were the ladies that my mother stopped with. The next day a picnic was arranged at Yasnaya Polyana, in the Coppice, with the families of Auerbach and Markof. Hay-making was going on in the abattis, and we all climbed up a haystack. After this Tolstoy followed us to Tvitzi, my grandfather's property, and there at the card-table occurred the declaration in primary letters as described in *Anna Karenina*. In September we moved to Moscow, whither he too followed, and on the 17th of that month the intended wedding was made known in

Moscow. He was everywhere, and always lively, gay, and witty ; he was indeed like a volcano throwing out sacred sparks and fire."

The reference to the "primary letters" requires explanation. While seated at the card table, as described in the novel, Tolstoy wrote in chalk on the baize these letters: "I.y.f.e.f.i.a.t.m.a.y.s.L.Y.a.T.m.d.i." How in the world Miss Sofya was able to unravel this mystery, and to interpret the writing, passes comprehension, even allowing that a very ardent love quickened a naturally vivacious intelligence. But we are told that she speedily divined the meaning: "In your family exists a false idea as to me and your sister Liza. You and Tanichka must destroy it." When Miss Sofya had indicated her comprehension of the force of these letters, Tolstoy wrote again: "Y.y.a.d.f.h.r.m.t.v.o.m.a.a.a.t.i.o.h.," which, being interpreted by the same lively imagination, ran as follows: "Your youth and desire for happiness remind me too vividly of my advanced age and the impossibility of happiness." That impossibility, however, did not exist. The lovers understood one another, though no word was said. Tolstoy was now a daily visitor at the Bers' house, all the family confidently expecting him to propose for the hand of Liza, the eldest sister. He, however, made formal proposal of marriage to Sofya on 17th September,

her Name Day. She joyfully assented, but her father was at first terribly chagrined, for he did not like the younger daughter to be married first. At first he refused his consent, but the persistence of the lovers, of course, overcame his opposition.

Such are the bare facts relating to Tolstoy's brief and successful courtship, but we must go to the pages of *Anna Karenina*, of which Matthew Arnold says that we are not to take it as a work of art, but as a "piece of life." In those fascinating pages the "Heart of Levine,"—the heart of Tolstoy—is revealed. It is a work of consummate self-revelation, and is, for the period of his life which it delineates, an almost perfectly satisfying autobiography. Here is no politic suppression of vital facts to rob the story of half its value in the interpretation of character. If the biographer should dare to lift the veil, critics unite to condemn such intimate disclosures as indecent. But who shall gainsay the right of a man to lay bare his own heart? Tolstoy tells us all he knows or thinks it worth the reader's pains to learn. *Anna Karenina* is indeed his "General Confession."

From this book, then, we gather that Tolstoy, when settling down once more on the paternal estate after returning from his course of treatment on the Steppes, and soon disgusted with the narrow and



forbidding conventions of the aristocracy, was more than ever enamoured of the simple, wholesome, laborious life of the peasant people. He revolted against the conventions of his class, and more and more did he grow glad in God, as the inspirer of all simple joys and the rewarder of all humble duties, lovingly and loyally fulfilled. He was even bent on taking a wife from among the people, when he saw Sofya, the "Kitty" of *Anna Karenina*.

Before his marriage he determined, according to the story,—and the truth of it is confirmed expressly by his sister-in-law,—to tell her all—all that he had been in his youth, all that the gay life of the university and as a free lance in the Caucasus and in St. Petersburg, meant. He had been tempted as other men are tempted, and he had fallen, though not so far as some, and never without being visited by the chastening and redemptive smitings of his wounded conscience. I know, perhaps, nothing in the whole life of this utterly sincere and candid being so convincing as to his innermost sincerity of heart and heroic steadfastness of will as this resolve that Sofya should know all. Let the consequences be what they might—however terrible to himself and to her—he would then, as always, be true, and accept the consequences. In coming to this resolve he even dared



consult the father of his affianced bride, and acting on his advice he placed in her hands a confession of the life he had lived, but would live no longer. He would do more—he would tell her that he was in the eyes of the Orthodox Church a heretic—an unbeliever in many of the most cherished articles of the orthodox faith. Very interesting is the comment of his brother-in-law, who also confirms the exact truth of the brave act as told in the story. He writes: "Of the two delicate points with which it (the confession) was concerned, the one which passed almost unnoticed was his unbelief. She was a Christian herself and incapable of doubting his religion. Her lover's lack of piety was a matter of indifference to Kitty: this heart that love had made her acquainted with, contained all that she needed to find there; it was of little importance to her that he termed the state of his soul incredulity. But the second acknowledgment caused her to shed bitter tears." He had a severe struggle with himself before he decided to make this sad confession, but he made it, because he would have no secrets between himself and his wife, and yet, with all his knowledge of human nature as revealed in his works of fiction, he seems to have been unprepared for its inevitable effect on a young girl's delicate mind. The abyss that separated them

—his miserable past from her dove-like purity—only became plain to him when, as he entered her room the evening after he had given her the confession to read, he saw her lovely face bathed with tears; he understood then the irreparable harm that he had done. He was filled with alarm. “Take these terrible papers,” she said, pushing away the sheets lying on the table. “Why did you give them to me?” She was at last seized with pity at the sight of his despairing face. “But it is terrible—terrible!” He hung his head, unable to say a word in reply. “You will not forgive me?” he murmured. “Yes, I have forgiven you,” she said; “but it is terrible—terrible!” This incident in the end served even to deepen his joy, as he realised what she was—the unspeakable worth of a soul so pure, so true, so good.

But yet another confession was necessary before the marriage ceremony could take place: before marriage, Communion; before Communion, Confession. Such is the law of the Eastern Church—and Tolstoy had not been to Confession for years. He acted again in conformity with his own broad-minded and sincere nature, in resolving to make his confession to the priest. He was incapable of wholesale condemnation of the Church, because there were so many things in which he could not accept her leading. Least of all could he refuse to confess

his sins as a first condition of inward sincerity and of Divine forgiveness. It were well indeed for many of us if we did more often confess our sins one to another, according to the Apostolic precept; well if to some learned and discreet man of God we unburdened our hearts, for how hard it is to be true, to know ourselves as we are in God's sight! How hard it is to speak true words to God in prayer! "Our daily familiar life," says George Eliot, "is but a hiding of ourselves from each other behind a screen of trivial words and deeds, and those who sit with us at the same hearth are often the farthest off from the deep human soul within us, full of unspoken evil and unacted good."

Yes, Tolstoy would confess, but his confession should be as true as the Church required it to be. "Do you believe all that the Holy Apostolic Church teaches us?" asked the priest. "I have doubted. I still doubt everything," said Levine. There followed a conversation, differing widely from anything he had imagined as possible as between priest and penitent. Then and there he discovered that the old priest, though a simple, unsophisticated man, had a deep knowledge of the human heart, and that he was simply and sincerely desirous of helping him to realise the meaning of his confession of unbelief. "Have you ever considered," said the priest, "how

you will teach and train your children, if you have children? How will you answer the innocent child who asks you, 'Papa, who made all that delights me on the earth, the water, the sunshine, the flowers, the plants?' Will you answer, 'I know nothing about it?'" Thus the old man went on to plead with him regarding his relations to the life he was about to enter upon, and in other words he asked: "Will you tell your child, 'I know nothing whether there is a life beyond or not?' Will you give your child up to the temptations of the world and of the devil? That is not right," said he. Stopping and turning his head on one side, he looked at Levine out of his kindly, gentle eyes. . . . "You are about to enter a phase of life," said the priest, "where one must choose his path and keep to it. I pray God in His mercy to keep and sustain you; and may our Lord God, Jesus Christ, pardon you, my son, in His goodness and loving-kindness to all mankind." Levine began the day full of joy at the thought of being free from a false situation without having been obliged to lie. Besides, he carried away from this good old monk's little sermon a vague impression that, instead of listening to absurdities, he had heard things worth the trouble of investigating.

The married life ushered in by this double cleansing of the soul, was one of generous confidence and

mutual love and trust, and if Tolstoy has said some strange things regarding the inferiority of a woman's mind, in which he betrays a certain Oriental strain undoubtedly present in his mind, he has always seen in his wife "a loftiness of soul which he could not understand." It was above his powers, and in hours when most deeply stirred, when, that is, most deeply and truly himself, he was freed from the chain that bound him to earthly things, and at the same time from the blight of doubt, he found himself crying—"Lord have mercy upon us, pardon us, save us," and these words were not spoken merely by his lips. Now he, the unbeliever, knowing no longer scepticism or doubt, invoked Him who held in His power, his soul and his love.

We have learnt from Tolstoy himself what changes were wrought in him by the vision of this pure and gentle love-filled spirit. How did he answer to the challenge of so pure a companion—to the claims of a love so precious?

The poet, Fet, gives us in his *Reminiscences*, an engaging glimpse of their home life. It was shortly after their marriage that he visited them in their country home, coming upon them quite unexpectedly in the midst of their homely employments in the house and on the farm. There he caught sight of her flitting about her household duties as happy as



the sun was bright, a perfect picture of a young Russian gentlewoman, alike cultivated and domesticated. "The Countess, all dressed in white, had run up to me in the avenue, with an enormous bunch of household keys at her belt."

She was equally devoted to her husband's intellectual and agricultural labours, for as her brother tells us, she actually copied out the great work, *War and Peace*, seven times, and that from his, in places, scarcely decipherable notes, and while engaged in this truly prodigious labour she was faithful to the minutest of home cares, teaching the children, and mending their clothes, while supervising the kitchen and the culinary department.

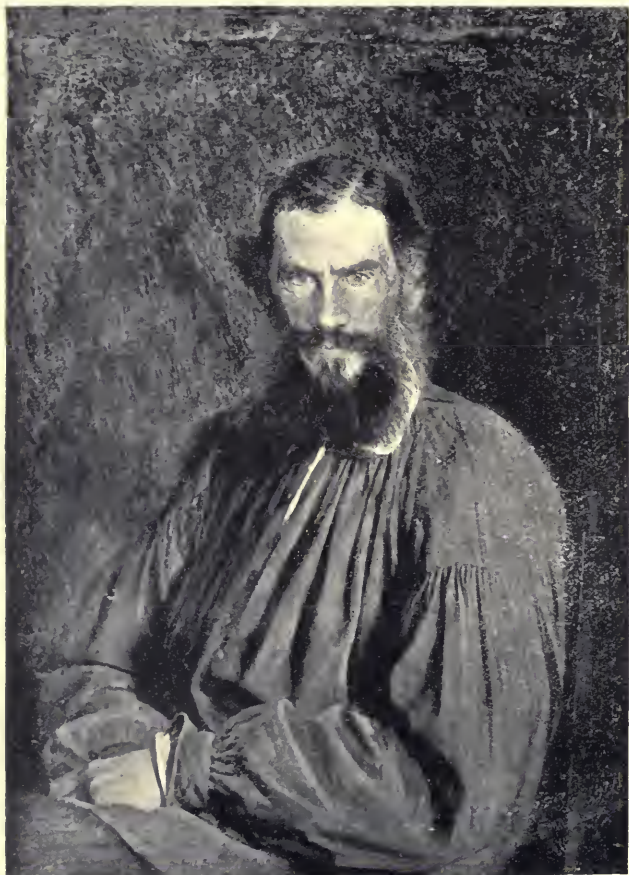
For twenty years the life of the Count and Countess was that of the Russian aristocracy at its best, filled with patriarchal cares for the well-being of their peasants, their only serious affliction being the loss of two out of the thirteen children born to them in the ancestral home.

The Count was, during all that time, still an aristocrat in feeling, though possessed of quite exceptional sympathy with those who earned their living by labour on his estates, and by an equally exceptional belief in their capacity and in their moral superiority.

During these twenty years he was assiduous in the







TOLSTOY OF "ANNA KARENINA."

*From "Tolstoy: His Life and Work," by permission of Walter Scott Ltd.*

study of scientific agriculture, introducing the newest machinery, careful to increase his stock, his crops, his orchards and his timber. He is candour itself in regard to his objects in this diligence. All his interest was centred in himself, his wife, and his children. All his care was to increase the value of his possessions, for his own sake and theirs. "Nothing," he says, "troubled him if all went well at home."

In other words, he was scarcely to be distinguished from other landowners, save by the exceptional strength of the home ties, and his admiration of the people who worked for him. But this period was distinguished by the production of his two greatest works of fiction: *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Literary activity, however, in no way interfered with the duties of the proprietor; nor did he shrink from the coarser avocations of the farm—indeed, I suspect that they had an attraction for him. He conceived a special love for pigs. The breeding of these animals engrossed him, and he lavished the same extravagant care upon this branch of his farming which he never failed to bestow upon any pursuit to which he devoted his energies. He loved to take a hand in all that was a-foot, and especially did he love to work with his men in keeping the sties clean. He kept three hundred couples in small sties,

and would not allow them to be dirty. If all was to his mind when he went his rounds he was delighted, and believed in letting his men know that he was pleased with them. If there were signs of neglect, woe betide the offender !

The old housekeeper at Yasnaya Polyana tells us that his particular breed of pigs was a specially fat, hairless, short-legged kind. Tolstoy's pigs unfortunately serve as an inevitable reminder of a certain English governess who spent six years beneath his roof, and took advantage of her special privilege to write a gossipy, and I fear it must be added, somewhat spiteful, story of her experiences.

Tolstoy chose English governesses for his children, because he believed that the principles of freedom were better understood in England than elsewhere, and that an English teacher would be more likely to sympathise with his views of education, trusting to no enforced discipline, but rather in the inherent attractiveness of facts, when lucidly narrated. He believed that we may safely trust the child's mind to take in what is worth absorbing, and to refuse what is hurtful or useless. If a child is not interested, only stupid and brutal people resort to force to compel attention, for the fault is not with the child but in the teacher, who does not know how to teach, or who wants to force on the child that for which it

has no use. The only reward he recognises is the joy of attainment, the only punishment the loss of that happiness.

Miss Anna Seyron, in whom Tolstoy hoped to find, and possibly did find, an accomplice in putting this extremely optimistic theory into practice, published her story, entitled, *Six Years with Count Tolstoy*, in 1895. In this book she indulges in many sarcasms at his expense. He was clearly less of an exalted aristocrat than she had hoped and expected. She was particularly disgusted by his interest in such vulgar things as pigs. "The sucking pigs," she says, "were looked after like children."

Birukov notes certain traits of character that were strongly marked in Tolstoy at this time,—and first his extraordinary capacity for being carried completely away by the pursuit of the moment, whether it were a game of cards, or hunting, or music, school teaching, or reading : whatever he did he did with exceptional *abandon*. He was completely absorbed with what he did, as if bent with all the power of his mind on exhausting the impressions of the experiences that occupied him, as if he would leave nothing to be acquired or felt to some other occasion.

Then again he impressed all who knew him by the utter truthfulness and sincerity of his soul. He impressed men as being perhaps the only person they

had ever known who had nothing to hide, who was consciously to himself in harmony with the truth of things. A third and final trait was his manifest love of goodness—his exquisite enjoyment of it. His wish was to widen the sphere of goodness—to show others its beauty, and to help them to enter into its joy.



## CHAPTER VIII.

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### **Tolstoy's Conversion and Confession.**

**I**T is one of the most remarkable features of the thought of our day that it no longer treats the experience generally known as Conversion with scorn and contempt. Time was when superior persons imagined that "Conversion" was an experience provided for by sensational religious meetings, got up by illiterate Methodists who believe that we cannot be disciples of Jesus Christ until we have endured agonies of shame for sins which, if we have not really committed them, we must at least try to think we have; and if we have not really grieved for them, we must at least simulate the heartbreak of an Augustine or a Bunyan.

Professor William James and others have compelled thoughtful students of religion to recognise that conversion is an experience not limited to any one section of the Christian Church, or indeed to the Christian religion itself. Under all varieties of religious faith and practice, men have been known to turn, under resistless impulses, from a life of sin and wretchedness, to a life of purity and love. It

is one of the phenomena of spiritual life in every age, that men who had been living in profound gloom and distress of heart, have found immediately, as the result of this turning to God, an unspeakable peace.

There is something in the spiritual world corresponding with the glory of the sun rising on Alpine heights. In the cold gloom of the early morning they stretch before us like a long line of spectral figures, reminding us of the deepest pit of Hell as Dante saw it, the dreadful abode of cruelty and treachery. Then there steals upon them the faintest tinge of red, and now they glow with the light of day, and as the mists and cloud-drifts that shrouded the lakes below dissolve before our eyes, we seem to be standing on delectable mountains viewing the glories of a heavenly world. It is but a faint and inadequate suggestion and symbol of the more wonderful change that under a Divine touch turns our pallid fears and miserable unrest into the joyful assurance that we are the children of God, and heirs with Christ of His eternal glory.

Such an experience is possible. The possibility is involved in our spiritual nature. We live in a moral universe divided between forces of good and evil. The greatest of all facts for us is the voice within that we call conscience, which confronts us evermore with a higher and a lower. Everything we

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do, we do with the knowledge that it must be either right or wrong. We never escape, however good or bad our past life, however our circumstances seem to make the right thing easy or difficult, from the assurance that we are bound to do the best we can. Reason recognises this as a fact. Dean Mansell, indeed, has asked by what right conscience presumes to seize the helm and to guide the vessel of life? Why should we submit our actions to this scrutiny and judgment of conscience "which doth make cowards of us all?" As well ask by what right the eye sees, or the ear hears? The only possible answer and the all-sufficient answer is that God made us that way. He gave the eye power to see and it sees, He gave the ear power to hear and it hears, He gave the hand power to grasp and it takes hold. Equally He created us so that in every action we are compelled to ask: Is it right, or is it wrong? This, as Daniel Webster said, is the greatest of all facts, the fact of my responsibility to God. The change that passes over a human soul in accepting the Higher as the law of our being and the inspiration of our joy, necessarily affects the whole of human life. It alters our thinking, our willing, and our working. Consciously to pass out of the realm of evil into the sphere in which happy souls are one with the Spirit of Goodness and of Love

for ever, is to experience a gladness and a sense of inward rest and peace which only those who share it can know. Tolstoy experienced such a change. It was not unprepared for, but it was consummated in one supreme moment. We have been bewildered by the constant changefulness of his life thus far. His was a heart that knew no rest. He seems to have tried everything, and yet nothing for long. From the moment of the great change that passed over him he never deviated from the pursuit of the ends then set before him. As a boy we see him precociously conscious of the forces of good and evil that claimed him each in turn. He tries stoical austerity and then epicurean indulgence. At the University we find him freely abandoning himself to the light-hearted gaieties of student life, and then suddenly, as if sick of it all, turning his face homewards and setting himself,—a boy of eighteen,—to be a saviour of society. In less than two years he tired of the attempt, and, disgusted with his failure, is drawn to the rough and reckless life of a soldier in the Caucasus and the Crimea. We followed him in his travels through Europe, and witnessed at Lucerne the sudden fiery outbreak of democratic passion and sympathy with the poor and the oppressed.

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Returning to Russia, he has clearly abandoned the National Church in all its distinctive dogmas and mysteries. Returning to the home of his youth, he marries and settles down to the life of a country squire. We hear of the birth of children whom he fondly loves, and of constant care for the interests of his estate and the welfare of his newly liberated peasants.

He is much occupied still, as he had been from the time of his brother's death, with the problem of life and death and the hereafter. Two of his beloved children are taken from him, and he dwells continuously on the awful mystery of our dissolution. He wrote to his friend Fet, the poet, on April, 1876: "You are ill and you think of death; but I am well, and I do not stop thinking of the same and preparing for it. Let us see who will be first!"

One of the strangest facts in connection with Tolstoy's conversion, the issue of his growingly serious thoughts of life and death, is that it happened at a time when he was enjoying all the blessings that he had longed for, and that he could conceive as contributing to a perfectly blissful life, as far as this world was concerned. He had no cares; he lived the country life which he most delighted in and which his reason approved; he was in the midst of an active life of beneficence, beloved



by his wife and children, respected by his peasants, and far removed from the cares and worries that mar the domestic happiness of men less favoured by circumstances than himself.

How did it come about? He has told us in the pages of *Anna Karenina*, where under guise of Levine he revealed the secret of the unrest that consumed him in the midst of his outwardly serene and satisfying life. I think that he speaks in the closing pages of the novel more convincingly than in the work which he devotes to the story of his conversion.

The question that arose to trouble him, and that he could not silence or evade, was this: *Why am I here?* What the world was made of, or how it came to be what it is,—questions of most importance to naturalists—were not important to him. The deeper, more personal question, the eternally important and urgent question, made its voice heard continually in his heart, refusing to be put by. What is my life? What *ought* it to be? What is its final goal? At the time when the question became so insistent that it had to be answered somehow, if life was to be lived in any sort of peace, he was a great student of history. He studied Greek, which helped him immensely later on, when he



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began to read the New Testament and to wrestle with its inner and essential meaning. He studied literature and the drama, but while his mental horizon was widened, he got no answer to his question, and was all the time filled with amazement at the pretentiousness of men of science, who seemed to him to have so little to tell the world that the world needed imperatively to know.

His wife was, of course, conscious of the change in her husband's way of looking at things, and that he was increasingly given to solitary musing. She knew that he did not believe doctrines that were dear and sacred to her, but in spite of a scepticism, which she would have regarded as wicked in anybody else, she did not trouble greatly about his want of faith, because she knew, somehow, that he was right. I imagine that this is most frequently the way with wives and parents who have husbands and children who give up the orthodox way of thinking, and who yet give clearest proof of inner faithfulness of heart and life. Their hearts tell them that all is right or that all will in the end be right. "How can he be without faith when he has such a warm heart, and is afraid even to grieve a child? He never thinks of himself—always of others. . . . Yes, you cannot do better than try to be like your father, she murmured, pressing her lips to

her son's cheek, before laying him in the nurse's arms."

What was proceeding in that husband's mind? It was the everlasting endeavour to give some answer to the ultimate question for all men who think at all: *Why am I here? What is life for?* He had given up much of his early faith as superstitious. He had tried to satisfy himself by reading the most recent scientific literature, but in place of the teaching of the priests, which was at least an attempt to help men to live, by telling them whence they came, what they were here for, and whither they were going, he had got mere chaff—mere words—no substitute for faith at all.

That is the position of hundreds and thousands of thinking men to-day, who have taken up natural science under the impression that they were getting what their old religious teachers had failed to give, namely, a true view of human nature, its probable meaning and destiny; but few are as clear in thought and rigorous in demand as Tolstoy, as determined as he, not to be duped by mere words.

This, then, is where he found himself when, having abandoned the path of unquestioning obedience to the "Orthodox" faith, he had been convinced that the professors of natural science had still less to give him in the way of help towards a reasonable

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answer to these deep questions about the origin and meaning of life which a reasoning man has to face.

Then came the question: If I do not accept the explanations offered me by Christianity, whither shall I go to find others? He then discovered that he had been utterly misled by his intellectual friends, who assured him that religion was dead. He now realised that all the best people he knew were believers. The best *men* he knew were believers. Nearly all women believed. His wife believed. Nine-tenths of the Russian people—all the people whose lives inspired him with sincere respect—were believers. As he was escaping from the delusion that religion was played out, a helpful contributory thought flashed across his mind. At a moment when, as he feared, his wife had been on the point of death, he, the unbeliever, had prayed, and prayed not only with passionate fervour, but for the moment with sincere faith.

Under this fresh inspiration he turned to study works of apologetics. He would at least find out what the most able defenders of the Christian faith had to say. In a celebrated work of Russian theology he read: "Man, when alone, cannot attain the knowledge of God. The true light is kept for a communion of souls: that is for the Church." The writer certainly, he thought, expressed a great truth.

It is not in isolation from the organism of which he forms a part that a man can know himself. But the teaching was not sufficiently broad, for it seemed to limit the divine society to the Russian or Greek Church. Once again was he confronted by the sad and terrible fact of vast hostile communities each claiming infallibility and excommunicating the other.

The result for him threatened disaster. "I cannot live without the saving knowledge, yet I cannot get it."

At that point he was led of the Spirit to yet another discovery. In *Anna Karenina* he says that it became clear to *Levine* that he was "thinking badly and living well," but we are, I think, bound to accept the strangely divergent statement of his *Confession*, in which he says that he came to see that he *believed amiss* because he was *living wrongly*. Supposing he could get into a right attitude and be himself right, then, if only he could escape from the ideas about God and life which were traditional in society, perhaps his own heart would tell him something about these great matters. What followed? The discovery which all thinkers and inquirers into truth have not the strength to make, that faith,—essential knowledge,—the light of Divine truth, lies not at the end of a laborious argument but in the soul as God made it. "Yes," he said to himself, "reason has

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taught me nothing. What I *know* has been *given*, revealed to me through the heart, and especially through faith in the teachings of the Church." Tolstoy is not always as just and fair in his dealings with the Church as he is in this place. If he had received some evil, as he imagined, from his spiritual mother—had he not also received good? In this passage he hit on the truth. All that was best in him had been begotten of the divine society into which he was born and baptised, and which had educated him in the life of prayer and in the teachings of the Divine Master.

It flashed across his soul that the truths which lie hidden for each man's acceptance and for his guidance through life, in his own God-quickenened soul, were truths simple and infinitely precious, friendly to the Being of God and the reality of what we call goodness and faith, and that they proved themselves and their saving virtue by helping millions of human beings, high and low, young and old, to live lives really worth living. He stopped thinking. He listened to the mysterious voices which seemed to wake joyfully in him. "Is this really faith?" he asked, fearing to believe in his own happiness. "My God, I thank Thee!" he cried; and he swallowed down the sobs that arose, and brushed away with both hands the tears that filled his eyes.



I imagine that all who have ever given themselves the task of penetrating the heart of Tolstoy must have been at times baffled by the prodigal abundance, the unscientific exuberance, and the occasional inconsecutiveness of this great man. It is assuredly only too possible to get but partial, ill-connected, even apparently unrelated and incompatible views of him, but this one clue no one need miss. No one need doubt that it is the essential clue to his inner life and his mission as a religious thinker to our age. He is a soul conscious to himself of being in harmony with the truth of things. This is a soul that will rather die than miss the way of life in the knowledge of truth. This is one who can find no rest save in doing the will of Heaven, of the Author of his being. The splendid prodigality of his genius, as he turns with unspent, unwearied enthusiasm to illuminate fresh fields of human inquiry and endeavour, puts a severe test to the loyalty and patience of the student and expositor, but behind all, and through all, we realise the penetration of a sincere and loving soul rejoicing in the light of a few simple, saving, and satisfying truths.

If now we turn to the book in which he calmly discusses the question of his change of spiritual outlook and the clues which he discovered to the mystery of life,—answers to life's deepest questions



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which came with an overpowering sense of their sufficiency and finality, we find that he does but elaborate the story already told. Before his conversion he had been reduced, he tells us, to the position of the ancient preacher: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Like Solomon he had gained the world, laboured much, achieved much, enjoyed much; like Solomon he had feared the nearing end, the grim fact of Death which threatened in a moment to swallow him up with all his gains. "And I turned myself to behold wisdom and madness and folly. . . . Then said I in my heart that this also is vanity. Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

He found that there are four ways by which men escape from the crushing weight and misery of this unsolved enigma of life. Some men escape by sheer stupidity. Tolstoy believes as much as Carlyle himself, in the stupidity of the average human. Then there is the epicurean way. The epicurean shuts his eyes to all grim facts and enjoys whatever he can. Then there is the way of suicide, which he was himself nearly driven to adopt. This is the resort, as he thinks, of very strong souls who become convinced that life is but a jest played upon us by an unknown and unknowable Omnipotence. Finally,

there is the way of weakness—the way pursued by those who won't, or can't, face facts, who are content to go on living, though they know that life is meaningless and that nothing will come of it.

In his *Confessions*, again, he explains how *the peasant* helped him to come to a right view of life and of the world. He knew well that the upper classes regarded the poor man, the man of toil, as stupid. He knew perfectly well how foolish his belief, that the peasant possessed the secret of life hidden from the wise, would necessarily appear to cultured people generally. Tolstoy was, nevertheless, firmly persuaded that such was indeed the case. God revealed it to babes. The boasted wisdom of the wise led only to an utter inability to know what life was, and whither it led. The wisdom of the age had led to the astounding conclusion that our *consciousness was a great mistake*. Yet the patient millions of working people, the people who do the work of the world, by whose brave toil the leisured and learned classes live, had not lost faith. Their reward was that they had light by which to live and to live in happiness. You cannot live without faith. So Tolstoy was brought to this point, that he was ready to accept any faith that made life possible, and that did not involve a denial of reason, for reason, too, is God's good gift, no more to be

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scorned or cast aside than that inner light by which alone we truly live, and to which we give the name of faith.

Tolstoy turns, as *Levine* in *Anna Karenina* turned, in the first place, to study faith as found or professed among men of his own class, and he found that they did not really possess it. How could they? Professing to believe in Jesus Christ, who lived a life of love and sacrifice, he found that all the men of his own class lived on precisely opposed principles of easy self-indulgence, always shrinking from any avoidable effort, hating nothing more than privation, suffering, and death. All that Jesus was and did, they put far from them. *Their* faith could be of no value to him.

When he turned to the ranks, to the people forced to live lives of hard toil,—to the ignorant, to the monks, to the sectaries,—he saw that this divorce between creed and practice, faith and life, no longer existed. True, in them all he discovered superstitions from which he recoiled. True, they did not give reason, the twin light, its due, but there was always something beneath the element of superstition in their faith, which helped and ennobled their lives. Among the peasants he knew no sceptics, but multitudes who spent their hard and painful lives untroubled by doubt, ready to die in peace and hope when the time and the call came.

And through this discovery he found himself groping after, and at first dimly glimpsing, the truth of truths, that God is no abstraction, but the spirit of life and health in all good men. He knew that he would have made away with himself but for the hope he had of one day surely finding Him. "I only really live when I feel and seek Him." A voice cried within me: "This is He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life."

It may be that when we come to follow Tolstoy's later developments, and to criticise, as we must do, his attempt to adopt the peasant's life, and to live in all things as they live, that we shall find that he very imperfectly succeeded in accomplishing his design. We may come to the conclusion that he fell into the error of the literalist, and that the uniformity of condition which he desired is impossible of immediate attainment, however theoretically desirable, but I think that we shall recognise the utter sincerity with which, at the moment of his conversion, he separated himself from all that he recognised as fundamentally opposed to the spirit of the life and Cross of Jesus Christ in the views and manner of life of his own class. "I renounced," he said, "the life of my own class, for I had come to confess that it was an unreal life." Great and everlastingly true are his words :

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*"The true office of faith is to give meaning to life, which death cannot destroy."*

And with these great words in our ears we might close this chapter but for the fact that his relation, under new conditions of thought about God and life, to the Russian Church remain to be considered. What I wish to point out here in a few words is that Tolstoy's first, and as I most earnestly believe, wiser and nobler aspiration, was to live as a dutiful son of the Church of his fathers. The thought lying at the root of the Eastern Church is that *orthodoxy is rooted in love*. Love binds together those who, while they may differ, as individuals, regarding many of life's serious problems, are one in the indisputable fact of their birth into the human family which has been created by God, and redeemed by His Son. Those who break with the people of God always suffer the penalties of one-sidedness and eccentricity. The worth of our individuality is its power to infuse a new light or to create a new movement of thought, or to inspire a fresh and saving activity, within the Christian Commonwealth. That is the real test of the validity of our visions and ambitions for the Kingdom of God. If we cut ourselves off from the society, which is the chosen abode of the Spirit of God, we find ourselves with what seems to us a rich cargo of intellectual treasure on our hands, which, alas, we



cannot put to any profitable use. I believe with all my heart that Tolstoy would have been a vastly more fruitful worker if he had been able to work within and for the Christian Church of Russia. That, remember, was his own ideal; that was the noble purpose with which he set out when he first found himself in possession of the truth of truths. Here, then, without multiplying quotations, are his own great words, words not the less true, that the task of reforming that Church from within daunted his heart, and that he allowed himself to be driven from his spiritual home by the ingrained prejudices and traditional expressions which marred his full enjoyment of its life, and by the slowness of heart of his brethren in accepting new views of the ancient and changeless verities of the Christian faith. "*In order to attain the truth,*" he said, "we must not go each his own way; and to avoid division, we must *have love one to the other, and bear with many things with which we do not agree.*"

It is assuredly, as we learn from that most interesting book, Palmer's, *A Visit to the Russian Church*, one of the possibilities at least of lay membership, that in fellowship with one's brethren in the great weekly spiritual memorial and offering by which we "remember Christ,"—the one act of worship He commanded,—the individual believer is granted a wide



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liberty in the interpretation of truth. How many of the wisest and holiest of men in these days, who have known what it is to suffer the agony of wavering thought, but all whose nobler instincts and prayers and sacred memories bid them cleave to the Household of Faith, have found in the sweet and mysterious symbolism of the "Table of Life," at which only a coarse and crabbed rationalism can scoff, a precious and indispensable link between the faith of the first disciples of Jesus and the best life and sincerest thought of to-day! In this hour, then, of spiritual illumination, in the fullest possession of his noble powers, when his imaginative and critical faculties had reached their climacteric, Tolstoy, by the exercise of reason, learnt and recognised the "limits of his own mind." He had been compelled to realise that while there were many regrettable superstitions enshrined in the Russian Church, there was a root of truth and righteousness and love in the faith which he had rejected. "Formerly I should have said that all in this faith was false, but now it was impossible to say so."

## CHAPTER IX.

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### "My Religion."

FROM the hour of his conversion, from the time of the publication of his *Confessions*, Tolstoy began to alter his manner of life and to lay aside, one after another, the distinctions of gentle birth and privilege. As far as he could, he renounced the life of his class. He began to live the life of the peasant, rising early in the morning, sharing the work of his work-people, ploughing, thrashing, harvesting. Not content with what is called unskilled labour, he set to work to learn to make boots and shoes, and was frankly proud of his skill as a cobbler. However we account for, however we criticise this change, we must recognise its far-reaching character. It meant revolt against the fundamental principle underlying our social system, namely, that the State exists to protect the individual, and to see to it that he is not interfered with in the laudable endeavour to make as much as he can at the expense of other people, and to live if he please, and if it suffices, on his accumulated capital. He revolts against the discrepancy entailed by this armed protection of selfish individualism. He sides

by deliberate preference—a preference rooted in the fundamental principles of the four Gospels as he interpreted them—with the toilers.

Nothing is harder, nothing more precarious, than the attempt to sum up the motives which rule human conduct, and while the more I know of Tolstoy the more am I persuaded of the essential sincerity of his spirit, and of the unmistakable reality of his religious life, it is possible to read the working of the spirit of unrest which had been so marked a feature of his early manhood in this sudden and even violent reaction against the peace and plenty of twenty years of domestic life.

From the year 1880 we find the change that had passed upon his mind and heart, expressing itself in growing simplicity in dress, in food and drink, and in the abandonment of sport. In a word, he lives, as much as may be, the life of the peasant, with his few wants, his simple pleasures, and his days of unremitting physical labour.

Even from the first the endeavour was doomed to imperfect success. He could not escape altogether the conditions created by his birth, his marriage, his education, his family. Thus in 1881 his eldest son entered the University of Moscow, whither the two next in seniority followed him. Then, too, his eldest girl “came out” in society, and the education

of his younger children compelled him to live much in the city, though he preferred the country.

But we have to look beneath the surface of his life, and to see in this renunciation of his class and of its manner of life the expression of the principles involved in his conversion and expounded in *My Confession*. In the year 1884 he published the first exposition of his *Religious Convictions*, and in that work he gives us his whole mind, so that the student of Tolstoy may find there all that is essential to a right understanding of his message. He amplified his teaching subsequently in the work: *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, and his last word on the same great theme is contained in: *What is Religion?* published as recently as 1902, but the essential principles of Tolstoy's faith are all contained in the earlier work.

I imagine that most people who have not read Tolstoy for themselves, have a vague impression that he is to be regarded as a dangerous anarchist. He has been described in an able article in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, as a Nihilist, not, indeed, in a political but in an intellectual sense; but surely the term is a misnomer, for if he is Nihilist in his rejection of the conclusions of natural science and of philosophical speculation regarding the origin and meaning of life, he is at heart a man of

faith, basing, indeed, his whole teaching on Reason—on something, indeed, deeper than Reason—the impulse and inspirations of love. Tolstoy speaks much of Faith, but by Faith he never means obedience to an external authority, but rather he means loyalty—first, to the motive force of life, that is, Love; and secondly, to the critical faculty, that is, Reason.

The book *What I Believe*, is largely an exposition of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

I do not think that Tolstoy really discovered much that was strange or new to him in his re-reading of the Gospels, but what moved him most was to find there the unity of his own disconnected thoughts, a synthesis of his own manifold aspirations after a purer, simpler, and more profitable life. All that he had vaguely dreamed, of goodness, purity, peace and love, flashed upon him with all the force of a revelation from the picture of Jesus Christ in the four Gospels. Christ made his aspirations tangible. It may be said, indeed, and it has been said, that what Tolstoy interpreted out of the Gospels he had first found in the course of his struggles with scepticism and his endeavours after a rational basis of life, and what he means when he speaks of the Teaching of Jesus Christ, is really the teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount.



Revelation meant for him the coincidence of his own spiritual reason with this teaching. He found little or nothing that he had not been prepared to find. It was probably his strong and continually reinforced hatred of violence which led him to hail with eager joy the prohibition against anger and against the swearing away of personal freedom, and against killing that he found there.

Tolstoy divides the teaching of Christ into five laws. It is, he thinks, the practical acceptance of these five new commandments which makes a man a new man, a wholly right, and wise, and good man.

I. Tolstoy finds first and puts into the first place *the law against anger*. "I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." The old teachers said: "Thou shalt not kill." Jesus said: *Thou shalt not hate*.

But in the Russian as in the English version there ran a clause which, to his dismay, took away the force of the Master's words, which rendered the precept nugatory. The words that pained and that staggered him were these: "Without a cause." "Why," he said, "no one thinks that he is angry without a cause." We all know weak orators who to-day enrapture their hearers with the principles of love and brotherhood which they deduce from the New Testament, and which they eloquently



expound, but who proceed to explain that these heavenly injunctions are not meant to be so applied to the present world and its institutions, as to interfere with our going on doing what we have always done, and that nothing is less to be desired than that Christianity should be tarnished with the faintest suggestion of alliance with extreme reformers, whether in Church or State.

Did Jesus deliberately reduce His solemn words, and the requirements of the Kingdom of Love, to bald and feeble platitudes? Do we not all think that we are right when we quarrel with other people? Do we not all seek to justify the bitterness of revenge by the enormity of the offence that has been committed against us?

The problem was one that Tolstoy could not give up. It haunted him. His delight was unbounded when, on reference to the oldest manuscripts, he discovered that the clause was an interpolation. This discovery bore out his persuasion that the Church had entered into a conspiracy to extract the sting or the cathartic virtue from the Master's words, regarding them as simply impracticable.

But the plain man who reads these words commanding us to get the better of the spirit of wrath says to himself, and possibly retorts upon Tolstoy: "It is

impossible that I should really do this. It is more than human nature is capable of." "Very well, then," replies Tolstoy, "one thing I refuse to do, and that is to pare down the words of Jesus Christ to suit either myself or you. I find the teaching of Jesus very high and very difficult, but that does not justify either of us in reducing all that was most remarkable in His teaching to bald and pithless platitude." Captious critics are never tired of saying that Tolstoy sets up a standard of life which he himself fails to attain, as if he were the only modern teacher who failed to practice all that he preached. The fact is that he fails far less than most of us, and that he nowhere claims to be perfect. Besides which, he has *rare common-sense*, and a *rare tolerance*. So, he asks, you cannot keep the command? You cannot refrain altogether from anger, friend? Then be angry as little as you can. Make one step in advance. Surely it is by trying to approximate to the standards of Christian ethics that we are justified in calling ourselves Christians?

Yes, Tolstoy is tolerant of all who try to master the brute in their own nature. He simply tells us that we shall get on better every day, and in all the relationships of our life, as we succeed in keeping the law against anger. Anger means a secretion of bile, and that is disease. Keep your temper and you will

be the happier, and if you tell me that you can't get rid of it altogether, well, there is no danger of your doing the impossible. If you can't abstain altogether, then abstain as far as you possibly can.

II. Encouraged by his first success, Tolstoy went further and found that Jesus not only uttered a law against adultery, but against all impure thoughts and actions. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

On this delicate, difficult, yet most important, subject I do not attempt, I do not venture to say in this book all that ought to be said—all that it is due to Tolstoy as a serious moralist to say. He has been severely blamed for the frankness of his treatment of it in one of his works, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, published in 1889. He believes that disobedience to Christ's plain demand that we should live pure lives is at the root of more of the evil from which the world suffers than any other sin. I think that he would subscribe the memorable words of the late Archbishop Temple: "Drink has slain her thousands and lust her tens of thousands." How this truth is to be said everywhere, and said wisely, and said tellingly, I do not know, if such plain yet utterly

pure-minded protests as those of Tolstoy are to be condemned. Tolstoy knew what his own youth had been, and that, bad as it was, it was regarded as exceptionally well-ordered by the people of the class to which he belonged. Men openly scoffed at his self-reprobation and self-loathing. They thought him, not indeed prudish, but certainly morbid. It is a terrible fact that his own father and mother had arranged an immoral alliance for his elder brother when he was leaving the schoolroom for the University, and they thought they did the right thing. They acted on the now happily exploded idea that health required and justified the illicit union. Even in Russia men do not say as loudly and confidently as they did that vice is unavoidable.

Tolstoy took up arms against un-Christian society, against the elaborate devices which sow the highways of life with temptations for the young—temptations which, I would remind every young man who reads this book, lead immediately to vice and guilt, but which lead perilously near to crime also. Vice is certain to lead you among the criminal as well as among the vicious. Vice may at any moment lead you to crime in order to hide it, or by association with men and women to whom crime is as familiar as vice. Tolstoy protested with utter frankness and unreserve against all the institutions and customs of

modern society which make it hard for young men and women to live pure and honest lives; against immodest dress, immodest dances, immodest entertainments, immodest, not to say indecent, placards that cover our hoardings and assail the eye of the young and the innocent when the mind and the heart are most susceptible.

I feel that in all this the great Russian who spoke first of all to the men and women of Russia, speaks *to us* and *for us*. In respect of purity, the change that has been effected for the worse during the last twenty years in England is simply incalculable. If prudery is gone, if merely conventional Puritanism, which forbade not only abuses but all the good things that evil men had abused, has lost its power,—for that we may well be thankful; but some of us regard the general lowering of the tone of society, the general well-mannered tolerance of gross impurity, as the most radical and alarming evil of our day. Tolstoy says to the man who has been brought up on contrary ideas, and who declares, “I cannot live up to Christ’s requirements of perfect purity,”—*try*. Do the best you can. Do not say beforehand what you can attain, or how much good humanity is capable of. Do not take for granted, in a self-indulgent spirit, that improvement is impossible. Above all, do not take



the sting out of Christ's words because some commentators accommodate themselves to the weaknesses of the world and say that He could not possibly have meant what His words seem to mean. Be sure of this, the plain, grammatical force of the words of Christ is to be preferred to any far-fetched and subtle rendering of them. He absolutely condemned all anger and all impurity. Here again he convinced himself that scholars had mistranslated St. Matthew so as to make Christ admit the lawfulness of divorce in the case of a wife who had committed adultery. It would be out of place here to explain the exegesis by which Tolstoy arrived at the conclusion that, according to St. Matthew, as in the other synoptic Gospels, divorce is absolutely forbidden in the interest of purity. "Again," he concludes, "there was confirmed for me that terrible and joyous truth, that the meaning of Christ's teaching is simple and clear, that its precepts are important and determined, but that its interpretations, which are based on the desire to justify the existing evil, have so obscured it that it can be discovered only by an effort."

Inasmuch as I do not propose to return to this question of marriage, let me make a distinction here which I shall have to make later on in criticising Tolstoy's literal reading of the commands of Christ



in the Gospels. Tolstoy went such lengths as to hold up to us an ideal of purity which could only result in the cessation and extinction of the race. Let men and women be here as are the angels in heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage. In an after-word to the *Kreutzer Sonata*, he explains that ideals would not be ideals, if they were susceptible of immediate universal realisation. He simply believes, and therefore teaches, that here as elsewhere the example of Jesus Christ is the highest, and that in the end things will be on earth as they are in heaven. This is the will of God. Towards that divine consummation all true morality, all literal and sincere Christianity, is surely, if slowly, leading us. There can be no doubt that his chief concern was to restate the Christian law of purity in the interest of the marriage state. The ideal of wedded purity and peace was one that has inspired and sustained him through all the long years of his married life, and to that ideal he has been ever faithful. In his exquisitely beautiful romance of early Christian life entitled, *Walk in the Light, while ye have the Light*, he still insists on the nobleness and beauty of that ideal. He makes the Christian Pamphilius retort upon the Emperor Julian : "Never again utter those terrible words, that a Christian life is possible only for those who are childless." No ;

Tolstoy is not really bent on preaching the Millennium, but he is vitally concerned to wage war against those vices, those destructive passions and perversions of the principle of love, which eat out the forces of life, and which are perpetually stimulated by decadent art and those corruptions of modern city life which a torpid Christian conscience tolerates and even condones. May I add what it is in my heart and on my conscience to add, that these evils will continue until Christians learn to distinguish between things evil and good, things that folly has perverted or wickedness abused, and until the best of men unite to strike together at the traffic in human souls in our streets, and among other things to take the practical interest in art and in the drama which Puritanical aloofness has abandoned to the Kingdom of Darkness? God only knows how many of the worst evils of life are due to this detestable Pharisaism which selfishly ignores vast spheres of the social life of the people, which it was our business by all laws of God and common-sense not to abandon, but to redeem.

III. "Again, ye have heard that it was said by them of old time: Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, swear not at all."

Here again, as in connection with previous com-

mands of Christ, there was something that at first astonished and baffled Tolstoy in his search into the mind of the Master. This commandment appeared so trivial as compared with what went before ! To promulgate a law against tumultuous passion and the wrath that fills life with bitterness, that robs the heart of the blessing of peace, that leads to murder and to war, *that* he could understand. To wage war against the lusts that corrupt the whole tone and enfeeble the moral strength of nations, that he could entirely understand. With these laws he utterly and keenly sympathised ; but to proceed to say : "Don't use bad words," appeared to him trivial. I confess that I agree with Tolstoy ; I agree with him because I know excellent men simply incapable of the evils against which the former commands were given, who are foolish enough to interject words into their conversation which were much better left out. There are thousands of working-men, unfortunately, who can hardly utter a sentence without the introduction of the coarse, meaningless word "bloody," and thousands of insufficiently educated "army men" who can't talk about anything without "damning it." We may be, and must be, impatient of such evidences of mental vacuity and lack of respect for the English language, but we no longer think of people as singularly wicked who use meaningless expletives.

They are very silly, they display a lamentable lack of true culture and self-discipline, but I should not say they were wicked.

But Jesus Christ is as earnest in condemning oaths as He is in condemning wrath and impurity. When He said : " Take no oath," He could not have been thinking of idle expletives. He must have had in view those serious oaths of allegiance, by which a man swears away his liberty to a king or a captain. Now Tolstoy felt that it was a sin, not the less that immemorial custom honours it, not the less that the Russian Church sanctions it, for any man solemnly to transfer his fealty from God to man. No man has any right to dethrone conscience and to bind himself to do anything that a " superior " commands, irrespective of its being right or wrong. Tolstoy felt, whenever he came to study this law, that it went as deep as the others, and struck at the root of one of the great world-evils. He saw that the existence of armies (standing armies) depended on the oath, for it would never do to let the soldier have a private conscience. His religion must necessarily be to obey not God but man. I enjoyed for some years frequent opportunities of remarking the attitude of soldiers—professed Christians—to their profession. I knew a General in a town in which I once lived, and where army men most do congregate, who hardly

ever met me without saying laughingly, but with, I believe, a conscience ill at ease: "I am one of the band of hired assassins, you know!" I, for one, have been compelled to inquire if we really do stand in need of a band of hired assassins? How long will the conscience of humanity admit the right of nations to standing armies of men, all of whom bind themselves over, body and soul, to do what they are told, irrespective of its being right or wrong? The only justification of it that I have heard is the plea that but for the standing army we should have no means of defence if our country were attacked; but I have little doubt that great nations as well as small are strong enough to protect themselves from an invading foe, and that the majority of the men of any nation would be found to fight in defence of their fatherland against wanton, unprovoked invasion.

It is marvellous that we should be able to condemn the principle, supposed to be professed exclusively by Jesuits, of doing evil that good may come, while we deliberately defend the same principle in connection with our own army, laying it down as a law that the private soldier must have no mind or will of his own, but must do all that his superior orders him to do. "Do not put this extravagantly," you urge. I do not put it extravagantly. I put it plainly. If you would know what the system really means and all



that it implies, you must listen to the Emperor William II.—“the most impudent of autocrats,” as Tolstoy calls him—who told naval recruits, after they had taken the oath of allegiance to him, that if he called on them to shoot their own fathers and mothers it would be their duty to obey him. I can only say with Tolstoy that this is diabolical, that nothing more wicked ever issued from human lips; but he who speaks these words is blinded to their infamy by the fact that they are spoken in defence of an autocracy that he presumes to be a divine institution.

IV. The fourth commandment to which Tolstoy directs attention is obviously connected very closely with the first, and upon it he builds his principle of non-resistance, which more than anything has exposed him to the scorn and obloquy of hostile critics. “Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also.” On this Tolstoy writes at much greater length in his later work: *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. In this subsequent work he passes in review the long line of eloquent witness to this principle which he believes Christ to have enunciated. In it he re-affirms his earlier literal and uncompromising interpretation of Christ's words. “May



a man," he asks, "kill or maim another in self-defence?" He answers with a plainness which no critic can find fault with, "No." "May he enter a court with a complaint in order to get one who has offended against him punished?" "No; for what he does through others, he does in reality in his own person." "May he fight with any army against enemies, or against domestic rebels?" Answer, "Of course not. He cannot take any part in war or in warlike preparations. He cannot use death-dealing arms."

In his later books Tolstoy declares that his question: "Can a Christian, remaining a Christian, make any promises as to future acts which are directly contrary to the teaching of Christ, and, taking part in military service, prepare himself for the murder of men, and commit it?" had not been answered, or been fairly met. He avers that instead of being met fairly and squarely, he has been told that he is not a Christian, that he does not believe in the Trinity, or in the immortality of the soul (the latter charge certainly is ill-founded), but direct painstaking criticism of the principle of non-resistance, as taught in the New Testament, he has not encountered.

Such replies as have been attempted he groups

under five main heads. Some profess such reverence for the Old Testament that they cannot admit of any possible advance upon its teaching, so that the New Testament has to be interpreted in accordance with it, and the Old Testament permits and ordains acts of violence against enemies. According to these critics Christian Governments are not in any way bound by the Christian law which as Christian nations they profess; but such a travesty of Christianity, he says, needs no refutation. A second class of critics attempt a reply less violently out of keeping with the law of Christ and with His principles of love and forgiveness. They urge that as there are malefactors in the world, unless they were resisted all good people would in time perish, and this was, in fact, once said by S. John Chrysostom. Tolstoy replies that to divide the world of mankind into two classes—the good and the bad—is to act contrary to the peculiar and characteristic precepts and example of the Founder of the Christian faith. He said that we are all brothers, and that we are bound to act towards other men as God acts towards us, not as enemies to be slain, but as children to be won and redeemed by love. God tells us that we are to overcome evil with good. But a shrewder method of meeting Tolstoy's calm, implicit trust in the word

of the Master consists in asserting that although the law of non-resistance of evil is obligatory for a Christian when the evil is directed against him personally, it ceases to be in force when the evil is directed against his neighbours. In the latter case a Christian is not only not obliged to keep the law, but is bound to act against it in their interest. In a word, he must then employ violence against the violators.

I think that it is much more important to make Tolstoy's meaning clear than to adduce the reasons why I am unable to follow him. Certainly he has this advantage among modern writers, that he knows how to make himself clear, and that he does not shrink from accepting the logical issues of his position even when they are most difficult to defend, and when they are exposed to the most pitiless denunciation of the orthodox thinker.

It is certainly true that Christ did not draw the distinction that the critics draw between evil committed against oneself and evil done to neighbours, and we must allow a large measure of force, I think, to Tolstoy's argument that we cannot foresee the results of our well-meant interference.

Tolstoy holds fast to the eternal verities and their unalterable sovereignty. The laws against anger and resistance of evil are for him so deeply-rooted

in the nature of God and man that he cannot admit that it is under stress of any exigency, lawful for any man to disobey them. He sweeps away with disdain all the refinements of casuistry, and disbelieves in the policy of evasion. He would say to the man who urges the politic suppression or modification of a fact, It can never be right, and in the long run it never pays. You tell a mother, for example, a politic lie respecting a son, lest the truth should injure her health. You attain your object. The mother's health is spared, but when she discovers that you have deceived her, even in her own supposed interest, it follows that she can never believe you again. Under similar circumstances she knows she cannot depend upon being told the truth.

The law of love, the law of submission to any conceivable wrong rather than resort to physical violence, is likewise eternal and changeless for him. We abandon the guidance of conscience and the confirmatory teaching of the Gospel at our peril.

V. He proceeds: "Upon this fourth commandment follows this one, found in Matthew v. 43-48: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy (Lev. xix. 17-18). But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and

pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans so ? Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' ”

Perplexity overtook him once again in the investigation of this familiar saying of our Lord, and the difficulty was only solved when he bethought him that to the Jew the word “neighbour” meant simply and broadly his fellow-countryman, whereas the word “enemy” stood for the national foe, so that, although there is no single passage in the Old Scripture which says, “Hate your enemy,” Christ, in fact, referred to the many places in which the Hebrew was required to oppress or exterminate the foe.

Was it not one of the first aims of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace to clear right away the thick veil of prejudice which obscured the duty of universal charity and brotherhood ? Was not this what the Master meant by the parable of the Good Samaritan ? To the orthodox “Lawyer,” a Samaritan could not for a moment be regarded as a neighbour. The sum and substance of the Gospel in its teaching on “neighbour” and “enemy” is this : The old law



makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles "The latter are your enemies, only Jews are neighbours. I say unto you, make no such distinction, for the Father makes none. He showers His blessings freely and with prodigal abundance on all alike. If, then, you would be perfect men, after God's heart, you must be prepared to treat all men as brothers."

According to the great Russian, this fifth commandment cuts at the root of that inborn prejudice and bias which is one of the most inveterate survivals of barbarism, which bids us regard with indulgence the worst faults of our own people, which presupposes the righteousness of our cause, the excellence of our national usages, the superior wisdom of our Government, and which leads us to look with suspicion or aversion on everything foreign. He reminds his Russian readers that it must be hard for them to read this teaching of the Master aright, who have been used to listen to *Te Deums* in their churches in thanksgiving for the wholesale slaughter of their enemies.

To the question: Why, then, did not Christ in set terms forbid war? He replies that it was impossible for Christ ever to have imagined that people professing to be His disciples—professing, that is, to accept His precepts of humility, charity,



brotherhood—should ever calmly and consciously establish or perpetuate an institution for the murder of their brothers. I may sum up this doctrine in his own words: "The whole teaching of Christ consists in giving the Kingdom of God, that is, peace, to men. . . . All the parables are descriptions of the Kingdom of God, which can be entered only by loving our brothers and living at peace with them. . . . Indeed, these five commandments have no other purpose than that of giving peace. Men have only to believe in Christ's teaching and to fulfil it, and there will be peace upon earth, not the peace which is established by men—temporary, accidental, private peace—but general, inviolable, eternal peace."

We are now fairly in possession of Tolstoy's fundamental ideas, and know enough of his teaching to see how far he is from being a Socialist. It were truer to regard him as the greatest of all preachers of individualism, because he rests the welfare of society on the regeneration of individual men. He is individualist in no narrow, selfish sense, and is utterly scornful of the radicalism which only asks of Government protection to the individual while he works out his own salvation in isolation and carelessness, regarding the welfare of the world. At the same time he trusts no reform that does not start with the

reform of the man. His religion, then, is focussed on these few burning points—non-resistance to evil, chastity, the labour of love, and social and international peace. We may say that he was on the track of these principles when he found them distinctly enunciated in the Gospels. His attachment to the Gospels, above all other books and sources of religious knowledge, has led many to suppose that he accepted the authority of Jesus Christ. He accepts it only in the same sense in which he yields deference to any teacher of truth, to any helper of the souls of men. We Christians have come to speak of our Divine Lord as our incarnate conscience, but our deep and thankful assurance that He teaches only that which the conscience of humanity teaches, and that which adequately instructed reason confirms, does not surely imply the right of every individual reader of the Gospels to accept what he finds good and to reject what he does not feel to be important and self-evidencing in the teaching of the Master. We all act too much as if we were fitted for this work of selection among the teachings of Christ. There are large numbers of devout Christians who, for example, do not think that fasting is important, and they pass over the Scriptural teaching about it because it does not commend itself to their judgment or because it is out

of keeping with their creed. Tolstoy would tell them that fasting is essential to all who would get the mastery of their own powers, and who wish the spirit to rule the flesh, but he himself passes by some characteristic words of the Master. What, for example, does he make of the precept: "Give unto him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away?"

I have said that my work is to expound rather than to criticise, but it may be well before closing this epitome of Tolstoy's fundamental religious convictions and teachings to point out that it is possible for many of us to feel and acknowledge a deep indebtedness to him, while stopping short of some of his extreme conclusions.

It is possible and consistent, for example, to accept with him the five laws of the Sermon on the Mount, to which he directs attention, and yet to shrink from saying that all government is bad. We can, indeed, understand how a Russian comes to be in this an anarchist, for government in Russia has too often meant the will of a feeble autocrat who is at the mercy of a corrupt and selfish oligarchy. But to preach an end of government when government is coming more and more into the hands of the people for whose benefit governments should exist seems to be suicidal. Government is probably not one-tenth

part as useful as we have been taught to think it. In some small spots like the Island of St. Kilda, where practically no writ runs, men get on much better than where magistrates and policemen abound. We all to-day admit the right, the abstract right, of resistance where government becomes an evil tyranny, and we realise that while in these days of dynamite and maxim guns a defenceless, unarmed multitude stands no chance against a drilled and armed force, tyranny must prove eventually powerless against a people who should unite to say, as the Doukhobors have said, "We will not fight. We refuse to enlist in support and perpetuation of an armed tyranny." I find that the right to protest against government is about equally spread among all classes, and among the professors of all varieties of religious and political creeds. A lady who was strongly opposed to Socialism, and to all law-breakers, while pleading the cause of law and order and conservatism in politics, said: "If the Socialists get their way, and, mark my words, they will get it, we shall have to fight, yes, and we will fight." What does that mean but that the principle of government is sacred only so long as it establishes one's own religious or political or social views?

But while we admit the sacred right not of passive but active resistance of government, and not less

when it happens to be republican than when it is monarchical, most of us are able to recognise the slow, sure growth of moral force in the governments of civilised and Christian countries. We more and more clearly recognise the truth that the salvation of society can only be effected by moral means, and that repressive governments are institutions fitted for the infancy of the nations, and that as people become truly civilised, governments will more and more rely on the great and eternal forces of righteousness. The day may be much nearer than some men dream when society will be put on its honour and find itself infinitely safer in the keeping of the laws of God, written in the souls of men, than under the dominion of the soldier and of the policemen. In other words, government is for the time only. The Church is for all time, the spiritual institution that, founded by God, relies on the force of truth, and which works by fostering the life of righteousness, of truth and of love in the souls of men.

But we are not prepared to say with Tolstoy that compulsion has no right to be, for we acknowledge the law enunciated by St. Paul: "First of all that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual." Compulsion is right, because compulsion is in the meantime inevitable. We have sometimes to treat



grown-up humanity as every infant has to be treated, that is, with a gentle force which every mother must use. It is not without effort and not without discipline that children become possessed of the principles on which Tolstoy lays such stress. Nations and individuals pass through a preparatory period during which they have to learn to recognise the supremacy of reason and of love.

The one fact that justifies optimism, is that the forces of truth, purity and love prevail in a world that was once given over to savagery, and in which it is possible for cynicism still to think scorn of what it regards as the feebleness of ideals, of truths, and of principles. Yet on the whole the weak forces tend to win the victory over brutality and lust. The mightiest of all thrones is the Cross of Christ.

What I have said about government and about compulsion is not meant to detract from the value of Tolstoy's fundamental teaching. We accept with him the absolute authority of the eternal principles of truth and love which every human soul is capable of being educated to recognise as paramount, but we believe that these laws and truths had to struggle for acceptance and recognition, so that repressive governments have had their necessary part to play in the evolution of a true humanity. The great contribution that Tolstoy has made to that development has been



in his clear and powerful exposition of the Christian law of love and brotherhood, "not," he says, "as a vague and distant ideal, not as a collection of fantastic and poetical reveries with which to charm the simple inhabitants on the shores of Galilee. To me His doctrine was a doctrine of action, of acts which should become the salvation of mankind. This He showed in His manner of applying it. The crucified One, who cried in agony of spirit and died for His teaching, was not a dreamer; He was a man of action."

## CHAPTER X.

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### "What shall we do then?"

**I**N the year 1886 Tolstoy published a book in which he recounts his endeavours to act in accordance with the commandments of Christ as he now understood them. The principles on which his life was to be lived were now finally determined. It was not so easy, as he soon discovered, to put them into practice. The title of the work was taken from the demand of the people to whom the Gospel was first preached: "What shall we do then?" To whom Jesus did not reply that they had *nothing to do*, but merely something *to believe*. He at once replied: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

Tolstoy, the thorough-going convert to the principles of the Gospel, in whose heart the Kingdom of God was established, soon learnt that he was not doing his fair share of the work of the world, that he was letting his brothers and sisters toil with excessive labour that he might live at ease and in luxury, and that he was enjoying an altogether unfair share of

the material advantages of life. We detect a certain inconsistency in his treatment of the unfair distribution of wealth and of the undue share of the world's good things enjoyed by the fortunate classes, for he constantly tells us that wealth is an evil, and as constantly claims more of it for the defrauded peasants, whose good qualities he traces to their exemption from its corroding influence. What he means, of course, is that the Russian peasant, with all his toils, cannot get enough to make life tolerably comfortable or to allow of the cultivation of the higher interests of life. Let all of us who are denied the doubtful blessing of wealth, let every working-man who finds it hard to provide necessaries for himself and family, and is naturally disposed to grumble at his lot and to envy the drones of society, remember that money cannot purchase the best blessings of life which it is possible for him to enjoy, and sometimes impossible for the rich man with all his advantages to make the most of. "Money," it has been said, "can buy nothing that is worth having. Sleep, food, laughter, work and play, also social emotions ; sunshine filtering through leaves, and steeping grass in light—no charge for that show ; sea-gulls hovering over the grey river and flapping white scimitar wings in misty sun-gleams on a winter's day ; pigeons flashing silver plumes against grey skies and dark

trees; suns setting in cloudy gold and crimson behind purple towers and palaces carved out of dim ethereal dream stuff—finest sight in all London town, free to the public on Westminster Bridge every sunny day; the first violet whiff of spring in the air; the balm of summer nights; the keen sparkle of frost; the purple glooms of autumn; the clear sunshine, and the friendliness of stars sitting serene in the sky."

This interesting passage, which contains a great truth, was written by a cultured writer who has never known the pinch of poverty. Happily there are thousands of English working-men who are free enough from sordid and depressing cares, and educated enough spiritually, to enjoy the free gifts of Nature; but as I read, my mind recurs to terrible pictures drawn by Miss Malvery of that same Embankment of which we are so proud by day, but which is so dire and fearful a scene of wretchedness at night, on whose seats ragged men and women huddle together for warmth and for the enjoyment of some human sympathy such as those too poor to pay for a night's lodging feel for one another. There night by night women may be seen peering into the dreadful water, preferring a miserable but speedy death to the alternative of ease and shame which alone presents itself to them in their poverty and distress of soul.

The first fruit of conversion in Tolstoy's case was the resolute endeavour to solve the problem of poverty and distress in Moscow. At first he could think of nothing better than a society for the relief of distress formed among the wealthier people of the city. The methods of the society, the detailed account of whose formation it is not necessary to give in this place, were very similar to those of our own Charity Organisation Society. They had a certain amount of money to give away, and naturally wanted to use it to the greatest advantage and to see that only the "deserving" got hold of it.

Very soon he felt, what I suppose that any man possessed of a grain of humour must have felt, that he was a bit of a humbug in his rigorous search for deserving cases to relieve. *Am I worthy? Am I deserving?* I sat weekly for some eight years of my life on a well-managed committee of the Charity Organisation Society in a provincial town, and I desire to speak with respect of my colleagues and especially of the hard-working and able secretary of that committee, but on the review of our joint endeavours I wish that we had said less about deserving and undeserving. We were in the position of being able to help by fortunate accidents of birth and education. The people whom we discussed so assiduously and whom we passed over as undeserving

were simply where we should have been had we been born and bred as they were. The object of the Charity Organisation Society is necessarily restricted, and its sphere of action is among the class of people temporarily disabled by illness or lack of work, and who by timely assistance can be helped to tide over bad times. It is good work, but it scarcely touches the problem of the poverty of great cities ; it does not deal with the helpless and the homeless, with the forsaken and the lost. Tolstoy was resolved upon going down to the roots of the problem of the poverty of a people and of the rights of wealth, and he speedily came to the conclusion at which John Ruskin also arrived by a similar path of investigation, that what was wanted was not charity but justice, that justice, which Ruskin said, has been "by the best men denied in its trial time, by the mass of men hated whenever it appears." He had long been acquainted with the poverty of the country. Now he was to become acquainted with the more wretched poverty of the city.

He found in Moscow what the would-be philanthropist finds in London, that mendicancy is a paying profession, and that fraud lurks at every street corner. Only those who live among the poor, and who live as the poor live, who get into personal touch with the various classes of working



men and women as Miss Malvery did, only those who succeed in establishing relations of friendship and of mutual trust with the lower class of working people, realise how much good there is, and how much evil, and are able effectively to help those who toil and suffer at their side.

Tolstoy's first experiments among the poor of Moscow were made near the Kitrov Market. At once he remarked the critical and sour glances directed towards him. He could read in them all the question: What is this stranger—this man from another world—doing down here? Was he slumming for amusement? Was he studying misery that he might write books or articles for magazines about it?

What surprised him was his own shame—the shame he felt on leaving a doss-house. He went away with the feeling that he had committed a crime, and that sensation remained with him as he trod the soft stair carpets at home in the evening, and as he sat down to a five-course dinner, which was served by two “lackeys” in dress coats, white ties, and white gloves. When the thought of unburdening himself of all his superfluous wealth flashed across him he grew dejected and hopeless as he reflected that that would not mend matters, that he would make himself unhappy and his family unhappy without making the poor any better off.

It was clear to him that it was only by improving the conditions of life for the poor could he help them. Determined to go deeper into the problem, he availed himself of the census returns, which were then being made, to serve as a returning officer, and he did his best to induce his wealthy friends to form themselves into a committee of help, which was to work very much on the lines of the Elberfeld plan. May I say in passing that I believe that this is the greatest social work of our day, and that it is only by showing readiness to make friends of our poorer neighbours, each wealthy or comfortably-situated Christian family entering into relations of practical friendship with at least one family who are struggling with poverty, and possibly with sickness, that we can give convincing proof that we believe the Gospel of the Divine Fatherhood, and of Christ's Saviourhood.

Helped by the census clerks, Tolstoy came into contact for the first time with the very people he had been desirous of reaching, but the truth, the sad truth, has to be spoken—he found them, nearly all, most disappointing people, who wanted money to waste, not money to educate or clothe their children, who rarely wanted anything to eat, but who nearly always wanted something to drink. Most of them had been better off. Nearly all of them could tell him of something terrible that had happened to them—

some accident that had robbed them of their means, or some envious person who had defrauded them. None of them wanted or cared for the kind of help which he thought it worth while to give. They wanted to be well dressed again, or they wanted a ticket to another town, or money to redeem a mortgaged property; and then if he would only help them as they wanted to be helped, all would be right with them once more.

But in their faces he read the truth only too clearly. They were living in the past, and had lost power to live in the present. Money would but add to their misfortunes and drag them lower down the hill. It was a sad discovery to one so prejudiced in favour of the poor as Tolstoy was, that the poor people of Moscow were much like the rich with whom he was so much better acquainted. They were equally unhappy and dissatisfied with their lot. They were corrupted with the same evil longing to do no work, and to live in idleness on the work of others. They did not want the culture, or the art, or the religion of the rich, but the luxury, the idleness, and the vice.

In connection with the taking of the census, he became acquainted with another class of "unfortunates," with those who in this country are specially known by that sad designation. They too needed

help, and he was eager to give it. He wanted to act in the most approved manner, and at the same time to show all possible sympathy, but here again he found that he could not get himself understood. The difficulty was to establish friendly relations with them. They stared at him if he spoke to them as a brother. He thought that he would go down into the district where the unfortunates of society lived, as to Ezekiel's field of death, and that at the breath of love the dead souls would live again. But actually he found that these poor lost sisters of his did not for the most part feel about their manner of life as he felt about it, and that they were insulted when he suggested that they should abandon it and turn to honest work. They thought, if they thought about it at all, that they were one of the necessary classes of society, and that their life was to be preferred to that, say, of a cook or a laundress. And then follows the conviction of his which is terrible reading for many. He found that the thing which was radically wrong with them, and which was the cause of their undoing, was precisely the desire to live at ease and to do no work, which they shared with the proud ladies of his own class who had no other, no higher ambition than to do nothing, to dress in sumptuous clothing, and to let others do the hard work of the world ; and Tolstoy

did not see that the one class, though execrated and called by vile names, were so much worse than the other, honoured as they were and courted by society.

The attempt to work, as I have described, on what were practically Elberfeld lines, though I am not aware that Tolstoy then knew anything about Van Heydt's great and fruitful thought, ended, as so many things that Tolstoy had taken up, in failure. His rich friends, he found, were very willing, or appeared to be willing, to promise help when asked, but they generally evaded the fulfilment of their promises. They lived on frankly selfish principles, and only gave when pressed, or when they could not avoid payment. He might have persevered but for the fact that he was in despair. His conclusion was decisive. "There was no one to whom to give the money, if we wished to do good and not merely to distribute it at haphazard, so I abandoned the whole business, and with despair in my heart returned to the country."

He abandoned his endeavour with a sensation which he afterwards recalled and compared with that of a man trying to pull other men out of a bog, while painfully aware that the ground on which he himself was standing was by no means secure. It was this consciousness which led him to realise



that his own life was being lived on wrong principles, that his own life was in imperfect accord with the commandments of Christ, and that he must reform himself if he wished to reform others.

On reaching home he began to ask why the unhappy people whom he had seen in Moscow had ever left the country "to make a living?" All the sources of wealth were there to be found. Why, then, did they go to the town? Partly, he concluded, because they could not live on the land under existing conditions, partly because they were tempted by certain attractions of the town—easier earnings, and greater luxury of life. The prospect that pleased was a less laborious life, higher wages, better food, and more abundant opportunities of getting drunk. I do not think he mentions, and the omission, at least in England, would argue some lack of candour, the desire to escape from the wearisome monotony of the life of the farm labourer. In Russia, as in England, the chief and prevalent cause must be the growing accumulation of the wealth of the nation in the great cities, while in Russia everything is done that can be done to make the inevitable hardships of the life of the peasant proprietor harder. Thus when autumn comes round, the Government officials visit the villages with, and at the same time as, the travelling traders, who



realise that this is their yearly opportunity of gain, and in a short space of time the poor peasant is left with a most inadequate provision for the rigours of the Russian winter.

One day the peasant preacher Sutayev startled him by saying that from the point of view of the Gospel his attempts at charity were foolishness, and he began to see that the rich were living on the earnings of the working people, and they used their wealth to segregate themselves into a caste apart, cutting themselves off completely by their manner of life from the poor—their fine clothes, their elaborate social etiquette, their palatial abodes and liveried servants—making it ever harder to approach them, until all idea or possibility of brotherhood had been sacrificed. Education even, was so regarded by the working people—simply as one other means of segregation, distinction, and estrangement. Tolstoy realised at last quite distinctly that the real reason for his inability to help the poor was that he had no communion with them. Wealth, in fact, had erected barriers which charity was powerless to pass. He came to feel that there was something positively damnable in the ease with which a rich man made small doles to the abjectly poor from his ample resources, which so doubtfully belonged to him. The poor perhaps do not reason this

out, but instinctively, while they will accept the customary alms from a rich man who throws them a *kopek* in the street, they begin to be troubled when a rich man attempts to manifest concern for their welfare and to give more than the conventional amount. So, then, he who would be a good man—that is, a brother—must not do it by halves. He must become a brother before he can act the brother's part. Tolstoy began to feel ashamed by reason of his wealth, and to ask how he came by it? A part of his income came from land left him by his father, and his peasants sold their last sheep or cow to find him the means for his life of ease and pleasure and luxury. Then, again, a portion came by the proceeds of the books he wrote. His shame was now traceable to obvious causes. Taking thousands from the poor, he gave back a few *kopeks* to such as took his fancy. In order to do good, in order to act as a brother, he must stand outside the evil of life. How was he to do this? "*What was to be done?*"

The evil lay not in the fact that he did not know how to use his money to advantage—that is, to the advantage of the suffering poor—but that he had the money. The money of which he had such a large share was one chief cause of the evil that existed in the world.

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Money! What *is* money? Some of Tolstoy's most sympathetic critics, like Mr. G. H. Perris, have passed lightly over the central theme of this book—the evil of money. It is impossible, indeed, for lack of space, to elaborate the argument by which he seeks to show that money is the weapon by which the rich hold the poor in perpetual slavery. The majority of men, he says, are still in slavery, though the old, crude brutality is no longer practised. When the serfs were not called free, their owner could compel them to do what work he pleased, and could call in the aid of the State to flog the recalcitrant into submission. Now that they are nominally free, the landlord can compel the peasant in another way. If he refuses the allotted task, he can refuse him the money by which to pay his taxes, and the State will flog him into submission. “The peasants have known for a long time that it is possible to cause more pain with a rouble than with a club.” Five thousand years ago Joseph enslaved Egypt by storing up corn during years of plenty, and refusing to let starving people have it, except on condition that they gave Pharaoh a fifth of the produce of their toil. It was starvation that brought the people to their knees. “Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread,” they cried.

The more recent method—an improvement on the original brutal slavery of the people, and an improvement on Joseph's innovation—is the method of tribute, and this, like the former, is based on hunger. Now the strong man demands the money token. To-day there is, as Carlyle said, only a cash nexus between the rich and the poor. The rich man cuts himself completely off from all ancient feudal obligations. He cares for nothing in his State regulations save the due payment of the bond. He undertakes no responsibilities or obligations to defend the weak, to protect the orphan, the sick or the aged.

In Russia the emancipation of the serfs caused temporary heart pangs and quiverings of the nerves of the aristocratic body, but they speedily realised that their fears were causeless, for the proprietor held the land and the supplies of corn. The peasant remained as much a slave as ever, save in name, while the Government screwed down tightly the screw of excessive taxation.

Most people who talk of slavery, and think of black people beaten every day under a burning sun to toil in the fields, receiving for their work food enough to keep body and soul together, have never troubled to ask what slavery means, what it is essentially. Slavery is a system which enables certain small classes to escape from the universal law of labour ;

by which, through the aid of State tyranny, violence is exerted to compel other people to work for you. That is what slavery really is. Money is said to represent labour. So it does, no doubt, and there would be no objection to it if the money represented the labour of the man who possessed it, whereas now the money is held by the people who don't do the work, and who therefore have no right to its gold or paper equivalent. Thus, then, is Tolstoy conducted to his main contention that if a man really hates slavery and would free himself from all sinful participation in it, the first thing he will do is to refuse to make use of other people's labour. Taken literally and without qualification, that is, of course, absurd; but Tolstoy is not one who is always at pains to protect himself against caviling objections. Evidently he means to say that we should not use other people's labour except in exchange for some service of ours. Understanding the principle as he means us to understand it, it follows that the good man, the man who wishes to act as a brother, finds himself confronted with obligations which it has been the great end of human selfishness to escape. In other words, we shall have to do the work which formerly we allowed other men to do for us, and it is clear that we must curtail our demands if we are to live by our own labour. We shall get our share of the good



things of life—get what we earn, get doubtless all we really need, and no more. This curtailment of demand will, he believes, mean improved health and happiness ; for the things which superfluous wealth is spent to procure are things that injure—strong drink animal food, tobacco, and the like.

But the best fruit of this determination to do our own work, and to live on the fruit of our toil, will, he thinks, be the restoration of the lost sense of brotherhood with all our fellow-men engaged in similar fruitful toil. Real brotherhood cannot subsist between men when one compels or permits the other to do his dirty work for a bare subsistence, while the other is in the enjoyment of practically unlimited means of luxury and pleasure.

Towards conclusions so startling and revolutionary Tolstoy was helped, in the year previous to the publication of his book, by an old *Mujik*, Timothy Bandarev, who explained to him that the religious sect of which he was a member, the sect of Sabatarians, obeyed the Scripture law of equal obligatory labour as laid down in the book of Genesis. This peasant teacher he welcomed with the warmest delight, while, of course, dissenting from the crude theory of Biblical inspiration professed by the sect in question, and the concomitant belief that work on the ground is to be regarded as punishment for sin,



and that no man is called upon to do more than is actually necessary for his subsistence, reckoned at about forty days' toil in the year.

Many who accept this view of the duties of brotherhood, as expounded by Tolstoy, and the far greater number to whom they are new, and yet appear by their freshness and simplicity worthy of earnest consideration, will be repelled by the astounding theory which Tolstoy further develops, that only those who work by the hand are accounted useful members of society, and that brain-work does not count. All other work, whether that of the statesman, the artist, the lawyer, the educationalist, the priest, or the preacher, is or should be, unremunerative. Theirs is not the work that every man is called upon by the condition of man's life on the earth to do.

He would try all work by a two-fold test. It is good only if the man who does it believes that it is for the good of mankind, and that mankind should recognise it as beneficial. With his two-fold destructor, made for the purpose, Tolstoy refutes the claim of the statesman and the bishop and the artist to be servants of the people.

He thinks it scarcely worth while refuting claims so foolish. The king, the president, the teacher, the rural officer, the sexton, no more undertake their offices for the public welfare than the head of a great

drapery establishment, whose one aim is to create a monopoly in his district, and to drive all small competitors away. I imagine that the most we can say for the average member of the great professions is that he believes his work is good for the world as well as profitable to himself. Perhaps there is nothing more urgently needed than a revival of the sense of vocation among the workers of the world, whether they work by the hand or the mind ; nothing more to be desired than the proclamation of the Christian ideal, which is, that no man has a right to do any work, whether that of magistrate, or artist, or merchant, unless he is called by God to do it. But why make the purely artificial distinction that Tolstoy attempts between hand and brain work? How many peasants, one would like to know, undertake the work of sowing and reaping with a view to benefiting society?

But setting aside the test of motive, do the brain workers, then, contribute nothing to the well-being of mankind? We are told that the world does not need them, or, to put it as Tolstoy puts it, that the rest of the world do not regard their work as useful or desirable. They may, he says, please themselves with the idea that what they do is good and excellent, but how are they regarded by those who stand outside their sphere of activity? Tolstoy, in his avowed partiality

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for the uncorrupted and right-living Russian peasant, is prepared to judge all men and all institutions by this one test: What does the peasant want with them? Certainly not many kinds of labour will come successfully out of this test. True, the world as a whole respects agriculture and recognises it as indispensable. But men must be clad as well as fed, and judged by this test, the tailor should have a second place in the esteem of mankind. Architects and builders should share with the farmer and the dressmaker pre-eminence in the esteem of society.

But as surely as the world advances beyond the pastoral stage of development, entering new fields of thought and labour, so surely does it ascribe honour to those who lead in these fresh fields of service. In spite of all that this great teacher urges, we feel that the world would be a poor, drab world were his standards of judgment accepted and acted upon. The things that all men need, and that all, even the poorest and least cultivated, understand, may be the most necessary, but necessary things are not the highest or the best. Jesus Christ, in that discourse which Tolstoy reveres as the highest expression of the will of God and the duty of men, taught us to think less and less of the universal physical wants, for which, indeed, our Heavenly Father

will not fail to make provision, and more and more of those things which belong to the spiritual and eternal nature of man. If that be so, those who labour to discover truth, whether of the soul or of its earthly dwelling-place, those who minister the arts of healing, those who protect us in the exercise of our callings, those who instruct our children, guide our thoughts, comfort us in sorrow, and those who, by beautiful and noble art, shed light upon our pathway and make right-doing easy, are entitled to their share of honour and reward. It is poor work setting up one class of world-workers against another, whereas the true instinct of brotherhood is to help the labourer or the artisan to appreciate the labours of those whose divine calling is to minister to the higher needs of the soul, only too much ignored by him in the midst of the soul-deadening activities and the excessively monotonous toil to which he is condemned. The notion that only that work is good which meets with universal recognition really needs no refutation.

When, however, he urges that the Government, with its army of expensive officials, is a crushing burden needlessly borne by the working-classes of Russia, he is on other and surer ground. The Russian peasant could surely get on better without this elaborate and pretentious and costly officialism. It exists to rob him of that portion of his earnings

with which his life could be rendered such as makes life worth living. But Tolstoy is thoroughly impartial in his condemnation of professionalism, denying the right of the scientist to pursue the study of Nature or of the artist to paint pictures at the expense of the working-man. I think that the working-classes of England are sufficiently educated to appreciate the claims of culture. There are no doubt some forms of spiritual labour which do not appeal, as yet, strongly to the English working-class. I believe that the Russian workman, however he may dislike the priest as a man, clings tenaciously to him as the dispenser of the sacred and indispensable offices of his faith; on the other hand, the English working-man as a rule does not think the parson worth his salt. He probably exempts from the sweeping condemnation such large-hearted men as the late Father Dolling, but it is, unhappily, the fact that working-men in England have been either driven away from the Church or have deserted it, and the reason is that the Church is associated in the mind of working-men with the beliefs and customs and claims of the alien classes, who like to have a comfortable and thoroughly respectable religion, the symbol of which is the well-padded pew, over which the working-man sees written in his mind's eye the legend: "Trespassers will be prosecuted." The



Ritualists do in many quarters make headway among working-people because their churches are open and free, and because their worship lends a touch of sentiment and colour to their somewhat monotonous existence, and, above all, because they feel that it is a religion of the heart and in touch with the other better world, towards which even the most defiant scepticism looks very yearningly in hours of mental distress and physical weariness.

But to return, the English artisan of the better educated sort believes in science, and begins to believe in art, and he will think twice and thrice before subscribing Tolstoy's dictum that scholars and artists are engaged in work for which the working-man has no desire, and for which he certainly ought not to be compelled to pay. "Science and art," Tolstoy says, "are beautiful things, and for the very reason that they are beautiful they ought not to be spoiled by adding to them debauch, that is liberation from man's obligation by means of labour to serve his life and the lives of others." What he intends is clear. If a man wants to engage in "beautiful" pursuits, let him do it at his own expense in his spare time, but he must not expect others to pay him for his uncalled-for and needless activities. Let men spend their time, if they will, after hours, in the laboratory, in the studio, the surgery, the class-room, the church, but such employ-

ments do not come under the head of the work which provides food and sustenance for the world, which work all able-bodied men ought to share equally. I imagine, that the thoughtful working-man in England hardly needs a refutation of this theory, that work with the mind does not count, or that such work should be done after the scholar or the artist or the physician has done his daily share of manual toil. The brain wearied by physical toil, the hand coarsened and stiffened by manual labour, are useless whether for the tasks of the surgical ward or of the studio. It is ill work setting class against class, whereas all wise and truly brotherly men should rather give their best strength to bring different classes together, and to help men of different callings to appreciate their various, and it may be, equally necessary and honourable contributions to the sum total of human well-being and happiness. I am sure of this, that if the factory toiler often sighs for what, at a distance, seems the delightful luxury of the study chair, the student as often wishes that he could enjoy, at least for a time, some work with the hand which would give the tired brain a good rest. I believe that many would really love a day's work as a shoe-black—so the weather were fine—or a day behind the plough, though probably the furrows would be far from even, and afford subject for the scorn of a farm labourer. No,

I do not think that the working-men of England wish to see Royal Academicians, University Professors, or Hospital Surgeons sweating in the fields. Every man to his last ; and this is why we don't want to see it, because our motto is, *One man, one work*, whereas Tolstoy puts it in such a way as to suggest that artists are not working because they are not sweating. "We have become so accustomed to those, our pampered, fat and enfeebled representatives of mental labour, that it appears monstrous to us to see a savant or an artist plough or haul manure." Quite so, it is or would be monstrous, not for the reason suggested, but simply because it takes a man all his time to become proficient in any department of labour. The question was once put to a man mending shoes : "How long does it take to become a good cobbler?" "All your life, sir," came the ready and wise response. I fear that Tolstoy is even jealous of a movement in Russia with which, I think, many of us would deeply and heartily sympathise in the interest of our working brothers, to introduce good art into Russian villages, good books, good pictures, good music. For myself I can think of nothing better, once the more clamant claims of the inner man have been attended to and satisfied. Tolstoy evidently does not wish these higher and finer tastes to be awakened in the

peasant class. "I assume," he says, "that the labouring people will forego the pleasure of ever seeing a picture, hearing a symphony, or reading verses or novels, only not to be compelled to feed these drones." To all who believe that the peasant needs a higher life and a wider life, and that only as he gets the one or the other will his life be really worth living, to those who desire with Tolstoy that the rush to the town should be arrested, these words are sad reading. They are sad reading also to all who have the real interest of human brotherhood at heart, who care neither for the special and exclusive interests of the upper-classes or the labour party, but who do care for right understanding among men of all classes and for brotherhood everywhere. I venture to say to my fellow working-men that the exhortation of the Epistle of Peter represents a truer wisdom as well as a larger charity: "Honour all men, love the brotherhood."

These criticisms and exceptions I, for one, feel bound to make, commending them to the judgment and to the conscience of my readers. Let me, however, say clearly that they are criticisms of portions of Tolstoy's work which we may keep separate from his main contentions in which working-men are likely to sympathise, and which are, I believe, in keeping alike with the teachings of the Gospel of

Christ and with the needs of our time. If we want effectively to help the poor and the weak, we cannot do it by what is called charity alone. The first thing we can do for the overweighted and harassed man, is to *get off his back*, to refuse to be a burden to him, to refuse to exploit his labour in the selfish interests of any class. Let us live to free him, as far as we can, from the incubus of taxation for objects in which he has no interest or concern, and above all, most earnestly resolve that never shall he be subject in England, as in Russia, to the unspeakable curse of conscription; and if I should be read by any members of the class who are blessed with ample means for the gratification of the finer tastes, who are able to afford time and money for the pursuit of knowledge and art and travel, I would say to such: Seek by all means to find access to the homes and hearts of men less favoured, live simply, and not in a needless luxury which must be offensive to all who have to rough it on uncertain incomes and amid depressing surroundings. Do all you can to avert that fatal sense of estrangement and hostility which constitutes one of the most miserable and hateful features of our social life.



## CHAPTER XI.

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### **The Doukhobors.**

SINCE Tolstoy wrote the important works which have formed the subject of preceding chapters, the most outstanding task to which he has given his strength has been his intervention on behalf of the persecuted Doukhobors. It is unfortunate that no accurate literation of this name, more acceptable to English ears, has been found practicable. His sympathies naturally go out towards persecuted dissenters from the Russian Church. Their views frequently approximate to his own, and the fact that the State threatens them is an all-sufficient claim upon his support. Few indeed among those who have espoused their cause have done impartial justice to the National Church. It is because she allows such large liberty of thought within her pale, of which all members of the educated classes avail themselves, that some critics are impatient of what seems to them a fanatical revolt against the Church's mild rule, for all she asks is deference to the established ritual, and willingness to accept her ministrations at birth, marriage, and death.

In order to appreciate the problem, something must be known regarding the dissenting sects, whose inclusive name is *Raskilniki*. The earliest of the separated bodies stands for the most rigid orthodoxy. They are the descendants of those who protested against the wise reforms of the Patriarch Nikon in 1655. This enlightened prelate summoned two Councils, at which certain new service-books were issued, in which many absurd and ignorant blunders of incompetent copyists were corrected. That such a reform should have caused a great schism,—and this actually occurred,—is almost incredible, until we recall the opposition of a large section of English Christians to the revised version of the Scriptures. They would seem to believe, not in the infallibility of the Bible, but in the infallibility of its English translators.

Other causes, indeed, co-operated to awaken a widespread spirit of revolt against usages which had an appearance of innovation, particularly when the change emanated from Poland, whose pre-eminence in culture, was a cause of jealousy on the part of a large majority of Russians.

In strong contrast with the "Old Believers" are those Russian sects which, like most dissenting bodies in England, are allied with Protestantism. Of these the *Molokani* furnish a good example.

Persecution has made these people so reticent regarding their tenets and their worship, that it is not easy even for Russians living in their neighbourhood to arrive at any intimate knowledge of them. All Russian peasants are reticent. The *Molokani* are reserved both by nature and by policy. It is not easy to find a satisfactory English equivalent for this widespread community, but perhaps "Bible Christian" best indicates their spirit, their organisation, and their method of worship. One very eager, and even pertinacious, investigator remarked that in the villages he visited, certain houses were distinguished by their neatness, by the air of being well cared for, and by a certain suggestion that their owners were better off than most of their neighbours. On further inquiry he found that these were the houses of *Molokani*. He did his best to attach himself to them and to win their confidence. After a while he found that they had no priests, and that their "elders," like the ministers among the Quakers, were simply elected by their brethren for their personal godliness and exceptional knowledge of the Bible. These good folk had, as he discovered, no scientific knowledge of the Scriptures, but their verbal knowledge was in many cases marvellous. Their elders were able to repeat whole Books of the Bible from memory. When these simple people experience

any difficulty in understanding a text of Scripture, which they regard as their only and sufficient guide of faith, they propound their difficulty to the assembled Church. The brethren then bring to bear upon the question all the texts that seem to them to shed light upon it. If these afford a clear answer, the question is regarded as settled, and if not the matter is left open.

A severe moral discipline is exercised among them, offenders being first warned by the elder in accordance with Christ's precept, and afterwards by the whole congregation should he prove unrepentant. No one knows how or where this sect, whose only offence is their standing aloof from the Established Church, arose. The most probable surmise is that foreign Protestants penetrated into Russia in the sixteenth century, and that this form of democratic Protestantism spread among a people naturally religious and too often left untaught and spiritually destitute.

But of all dissenters the most severely persecuted have been the *Doukhobors*, and when we glance at their distinctive tenets and come to realise their close affinity with the Society of Friends in many particulars, we shall have no difficulty in understanding Tolstoy's peculiar partiality for them. Orest Novitsky tells us that their most outstanding

belief is in the inner light which guides the seeking soul into all truth. They believe that we exist before our birth into this earthly life, and that the soul continues to live on the other side of death. Like the *Molokani* they have neither priest nor sacrament, though they may sometimes admit to the brotherhood by adult baptism. Tolstoy was particularly attracted to them by reason of their opposition to the use of force in propagating religion, by their passive resistance to the Government, and by their refusal to bear arms. As compared with the simple *Molokani*, founding their faith and practice on Bible texts taken at haphazard from all portions of Scripture indifferently, and uncritically interpreted, without the least regard to the original historical implication of the words, they would be generally regarded as unorthodox dissenters, trusting, as they do, to the inner light rather than to the sacred text. Some of their tenets, considered altogether apart from their truth, are most remarkable when we remember that most of the adherents of the community are uneducated peasants. They hold that the Father is Life, the Son Light, and the Spirit Peace. They believe that a man suffers for his own sin, and not for that of Adam. They have a wonderfully spiritual interpretation of the personality and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, up to whom they look as the



Spirit of Truth Incarnate. They say that He is born, that He preaches, suffers, dies, and rises again in the heart of each true believer. It follows from this teaching of the inner light that a knowledge of Jesus Christ "after the flesh" is not essential to salvation. Are we not all sons of God? Will not the Divine light at last lead all God's sons to a realisation and fruitful understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus? And because all men are the children of God they need no human government—at least God's worthy sons who walk by the light He gives them need none. War is to them, as to Tolstoy, an utter and diabolical contradiction of the Gospel. Is it not the slaying of brothers? Thus they are willing to bear any pain and any penalty rather than bear arms.

In regard to worship they are singularly tolerant. All forms of worship are to them indifferent. A man may enter a Greek Church, or a Roman Church, or a Lutheran Church, but the only real and available prayer is that of the heart, the prayer of the inner chamber, as taught by Jesus Christ. They are a sober, laborious, and frugal people, and like the more orthodox evangelical believers, industrious in agriculture, and careful of their homes. Tolstoy, however, was drawn to them, not only on account of their "passive resistance" to the Russian Government, but

because of the extreme simplicity and even austerity of their lives. They abstain as a body from meat and fish, from alcohol and tobacco, though some of them have relaxed the rigour of their abstinence principles since settling in Canada, of which settlement I propose to give some account later on.

At the present time they have as their leader Peter Verigin, up to whom they look with superstitious veneration ; indeed, their one approach to fanaticism is in almost deifying their God-sent leader. It is a subject that requires further investigation, but the present success of the Canadian colony of Doukhobors has evidently been attained by the remarkable personal gifts and wisdom of Peter Verigin, and he in turn owes his spiritual culture and clearness of view to the friendship and instruction of Tolstoy.

Early in the last century the main body of Doukhobors were transported to the Caucasus, where it was supposed that they would either fight in opposition to their creed, or that they would be speedily exterminated by the fierce and warlike hillsmen. In this St. Petersburg was disappointed. The Doukhobors first astonished and then won the reluctant admiration of their wild neighbours. The Doukhobors were "good men" and not Christians ! Christians were greedy and pugnacious, but these

inoffensive people obeyed the precepts of the Lord Jesus, which they, as good Mohammedans, were of course bound to venerate.

When, however, the conscription was introduced into the Caucasus in 1887, the troubles of these singular people—singular in virtue and in patience—began again. They would not swear to kill their fellow-men if called upon to do so. Peter Verigin led them in this united act of passive defiance of the Russian Government. A terrible persecution was the immediate consequence. They were quite ready to be killed, but on no account would they consent to kill. To kill is the same as to commit murder. The fact that a man is commanded to do a wicked thing by a very powerful combination does not, in the opinion of these singular sectaries, make it right to do so.

We may frankly admit that the position of the Russian Government was one of extreme difficulty. They simply dared not exempt the Doukhobors from the conscription. To have done so would have been an invitation to the whole Russian peasantry to forsake the Church and to become Doukhobors, for the great dread of the Russian peasant is of being compelled to serve as a soldier. It is my regret that lack of space forbids my attempting to tell the story of their terrible sufferings, and of the

breaking up of their settlements. Their leaders were imprisoned, beaten, murdered. It is, or surely should be, our pride as Englishmen that Tolstoy turned in this extremity to the Society of Friends in Great Britain, who showed again their practical faith by sending generous gifts for their relief. It was owing however, to Tolstoy's personal intervention that permission was tardily granted by the Government to the persecuted Doukhobors to leave the country if they would do so at their own cost. Their leaders, who like Verigin himself, were in exile, were to complete their sentences, and if they ever returned to their native soil, they were to be transported to the most distant parts of Siberia. In September of the year 1898, Prince Hilkov, accompanied by Mr. Aylmer Maude, visited Canada, and arranged for a general emigration of the members of the community. Before the winter of the following year, 7,000 of them were already settled in their new home. It was not found practicable to settle so considerable a body of emigrants on one spot. Three separate colonies were ultimately arranged, known as the North, the South, and the Prince Albert Colonies respectively. The two former are in close proximity, whereas the latter is 250 miles west of the other two. The first party of 2,000 emigrants reached Nova Scotia on 23rd January, 1899, after a month's

voyage, the length of which greatly tried the faith of some of the women of the party, who were convinced that the ship had "lost its way." There can be no doubt that, guided by the teaching of their leader, they intended to live on communistic principles in their New World home, and there is also no doubt that a considerable minority abandoned Communism, and claimed the rights of private ownership at an early stage of the experiment. In the Northern settlement the men were mostly engaged on the railroad. Their earnings were paid into the Common Treasury, but most of the troubles which critics of Communism foretell actually occurred. Soon only half the men were at work ; many took clothes and other articles from the common store on credit, and when we remember the tenets of the sect, these irregularities are not to be wondered at. The idea of compulsion is abhorrent to them. The freedom of the individual is one of their most sacredly-cherished principles. In the end, and the end was speedily reached, the Commune, as far as the North Colony is concerned, was abandoned, and each village was left free to communise on its own account. This was more in keeping with the instinct and experience of the Russian peasants, who were accustomed to manage the affairs of the village in the Village Council, or *Mir*. The change was immediately



successful. The number of men willing to work and actually working on the railroad, was doubled, and the average earnings of the men rose almost in the same proportion.

In the South Colony, in some villages, all work done, and all animals and implements of labour, were communal. Other villages went further, and all goods, whether purchased, or procured by the labour of members of the Commune, were treated as common property. In some cases the experiment of common meals was tried. Whether we have regard to the Northern or Southern Settlement, the "Commune" principle prospered, where the leaders were men of religious principle and personal capacity, industry, and authority. Where the Doukhobor principles were observed in all their stringency, there we find success. The price paid was what most of us would regard as a heavy one. As in Scotland and in New England, under Puritan rule, personal freedom was sacrificed in the name of liberty, and this spiritual tyranny enacted a drastic inquisition into the life and behaviour of every man in the village, the least departure from Doukhobor custom, such as the eating of fish, which was condoned in the Northern Settlement, being treated as a virtual apostasy from the faith.

It would be too long a story to show by instances, adduced by Mr. Aylmer Maude in his interesting book on the Doukhobors, how the two ideals, the communal and the individualistic, strove for the mastery among them, but this may be said summarily, that where the village leaders were strong men, strongly attached to Doukhobor principles, the Commune flourished. On the other hand, where leadership lacked, and individuals arose asserting personal freedom and pressing new methods, the Commune began to crumble away.

The difficulty of dealing with the character and enterprise of such a people, nurtured in the principles of Christian idealism, perpetually harassed by persecution, suddenly transplanted into a new and strange world, is of course very great. We are prone to judge men, whose religion and experience are abnormal, by our own standards. Tolstoy, who believes that they alone obey the laws, and practice the virtues of the Christian Gospel, is inclined to speak of them as spotless saints, while such as loathe Socialism in any shape or form, and who do not want to find in them anything better than ignorant fanatics, seize on their puerilities and exaggerate the more forbidding aspects of their rigid, ascetic piety. One could not desire a fairer summary of the evidence available than that given

by Mr. Aylmer Maude. He says: "I have no hesitation in saying that it would be hard to find a community, consisting of an equal number of men, among whom there is less crime and more industry, honesty, and hospitality, or more personal attention by the male adults to the needs of the old people and the children. . . . Compared with the fancy pictures drawn by some enthusiasts, they are disappointing, but compared with ordinary human beings, they are worthy and estimable folk, in spite of their obstinacy, sectarian exclusiveness, suspiciousness, and their too great dependence on a very fallible human authority."

Our special concern is with the influence which Tolstoy exerted on the fortunes of the colonists. In estimating this influence we must be guided by Mr. Maude, who tells us that while the letter written in apostolic spirit by Tolstoy to the colonists, while their leader was still absent from them, directs them to the re-establishment of communistic principles, such as now obtain, his influence on these strangely interesting folk was obtained not directly but solely through Verigin. They knew no light or law but his. Tolstoy's letter might as well have been left unpenned but for the fact that he had indoctrinated their leader with his principles.

Professor James Mavor of Toronto University has

made a special study of the social and economical conditions and activities of the Doukhobors. He speaks of Peter Verigin as indeed a remarkable man. "If," he writes, "Mr. Verigin can succeed in organising the labour of the large body of men he has to deal with, and in holding them together, there is no doubt that in a few years the Doukhobor lands will be among the most productive in the north-west." All investigators, whether of the work as a whole, or of the greater or less success of particular village Communes, are agreed, I think, that Communism depends for its success on a very strong leadership, and on the binding power of the religious principles of the sect, together with the personal hypnotism of their leader. The experiment, as a whole, bids fair in the meantime to be a success, in spite of the undoubted fact that many individuals of exceptional gifts have broken away from the Commune to which they were attached, to the loss of the village, and what?—possibly to their spiritual and moral loss, but certainly to their own material advantage.

One, Ivan Kanigin, is typical of this class. He chafed under the authority of Verigin, and thereby proved himself a bad Doukhobor. He withdrew from his village Commune and was told he was "no Doukhobor." He seems to have been shabbily

treated on his departure, and to be conscientiously opposed to the communistic principle. He cannot stand, or rather bow, to Verigin's authority. As he expresses it : " I cannot say Boss."

It must have been a sore trial to Tolstoy to hear that in the first years of the settlement in Canada that he had done so much to bring about, the principles of communal life, not as a government, but, as he regards it, the natural inevitable result of the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ in the heart, were being endangered. To them, in the absence of their leader, he wrote a beautiful letter, some passages of which I will transcribe, for they reveal the man, and sum up again the main contention of his ministry to the modern world. " Dear brothers and sisters,—You suffered and were exiled, and are still suffering want, because you wished, not in words but in deeds, to lead a Christian life. You refused to do any violence to your neighbours, to take oaths, to serve as police or soldiers ; and you even burnt your own weapons lest you should be tempted to use them in self-defence ; and in spite of all persecutions you remained true to the Christian teaching." In a following passage we are reminded of St. Paul's passionate expostulation with the fickle Gauls who were forsaking the freedom of the Spirit for the slavery of the law. It is as if we heard him cry : " O foolish Galatians, who did



bewitch you?" "See now, say the enemies of Christianity, these are your Doukhobors! As soon as they reach Canada, a free country, they begin to live like other people, and to gather property each for himself; and not only do they not share each with his brethren, but each tries to seize as much as possible for himself. So that evidently all they did before was only done at their leader's order, and without their well knowing why they did it. Dear brothers and sisters, I know and understand the difficulty of your position in a foreign country, among strangers who give no one anything freely, and I know how terrible it is to think that those near to one, and the weak ones of one's own family, may remain destitute and lacking support. I know how difficult it is to live in community, and how hard it is to work for others who are not industrious, and who consume what they do not earn. All this I know; but I know also that if you wish to continue to live a Christian life, and do not wish to disavow all for the sake of which you suffered and were exiled from your fatherland, then you must not live as the world lives, each accumulating property separately for himself and his own family, and withholding it from others.

"In order most surely to secure himself, man has only one means, and this means is the very one

taught by Christ: to work as much as possible, and content himself with as little as possible. . . . The man who does this will everywhere and always be secure. . . . To me, an old man at the furthest limit of time and watching from aside, all this is quite plain; but you also, dear brothers and sisters, if you will but think quietly (throwing off for awhile the temptations of the world), you too will see clearly that each man will lose nothing, but can only gain in all respects by living not for himself, but by living to fulfil God's will. It is said: 'Seek the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.' Each man can test whether that is true. You have made the trial and know it to be true. The only other plan is to seek for the other things—for property and worldly pleasure—and failing to secure them, to lose the Kingdom of Heaven also.

As to detailed arrangements of your communal life, I dare not advise you, knowing that you, and especially your elders, are experienced and wise in this matter. I only know that all will be well if each of you but remembers that he did not come into this world by his own will, but by the will of God, who sent him into this short life to do His will. And His will is expressed in the command to love. And to collect property separately for one's self, and

to withhold it from others, is to act contrary to the will of God and to His commandments.—Farewell.

Your loving brother,

“LEO TOLSTOY.”

27th February, n.s., 1900.

But before leaving the subject of the Doukhobors, let me refer to two remarkable letters that Tolstoy addressed to their exiled leader. I call very special attention to them, because they reveal a new Tolstoy. In his fiction, and generally in his religious works, he addresses educated people, and credits them with a great deal more sense than many of his critics appear to possess, but in speaking to a simple, untaught man, I mean untaught by books, and profoundly distrustful of all the products of science and civilisation, we are made to realise how reasonable Tolstoy is, how in his humble and sincere and entire devotion to the precepts of the Master, he cherishes no fanatical hatred or fear of railroads, factories, and telephones. To Verigin, who admits only the prophetic voice of man in the communication of God's truth, Tolstoy, while speaking very dubiously of the good of much that he himself has written, points out the folly of refusing to spread truth by the book that circulates by hundreds and by thousands. To object to books is like objecting to speak in a loud voice so that many may hear

what you have to say. As he urges, so many harmful books are written and circulated that the only way to counteract their baneful influence is by writing and publishing good ones. By printing we fulfil the teaching and obey the command of the Master, who said, "What I tell you in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops."

In October of the following year, 1896, he returns to the subject, and shows his friend, who had evidently proved obdurate and hard to convince, that not only are books not necessarily bad, but that the modern arts and conveniences of life are likewise not to be summarily condemned as works of the devil, so long as they do not interfere with the higher things of the spirit. Good *men* are worth more than good books and good railroads, and beautiful dresses and pictures. The evil of civilisation, as he sees, is not in the things themselves, but in the sacrifice of human lives, the cynical disregard of the higher interests of manhood, in procuring them. Tolstoy sets his face like a flint against all who would sacrifice even one human soul to the production of the refinements and luxuries and conveniences of life. He feels, as all God's prophets have ever felt, the exceeding sanctity of the soul. I know not any teacher who has so deeply felt the force of our Lord's words, "Is not the

life more than the meat, and the body than the raiment?"

"That is where the terrible mistake of our times is to be found ; not in the fact that printing-offices, railroads, and other such things exist, but in the fact that men consider it allowable to sacrifice the welfare, were it only of a single man, for the accomplishment of any business, however great." It were better to do without things, better that they should all perish "until we can learn to get them without destroying the happiness and life of men. . . ." "But to say that railroads, gas, electricity, and book-printing are harmful, because for their sakes human lives are sacrificed, is like saying that ploughing and sowing are harmful, merely because I ploughed a field at the wrong time, let it get overgrown with weeds, and then sowed seed without reploughing—that is to say, did things out of turn and at the wrong time."

The concluding passage in this second letter to Peter Verigin is doubly valuable for its inimitable piece of humble self-revelation, and for the light it throws on the question, "Has Tolstoy acted up to his own principles?" No man has been so scornfully criticised for preaching high doctrine, and living very much as other people live, than he. But while refusing to impair the force of one of the least of



Christ's commands to suit his own or others' convenience, he confesses that he regrets nothing so much as his weakness in not freeing himself more entirely from the trammels and conventions of society. In praising his friend for working in the fields for bread, he says: "I have now become very faulty in that respect, surrounded as I am by all kinds of luxury, which I hate, but from which I have not the strength to escape. Your example encourages me, and I do not cease to make efforts. You are very dear to me, and I try to deal as straightforwardly as possible, like a brother in relation to you.—Yours lovingly,

"LEO TOLSTOY."

14th October, o.s., 1896.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### **"In Aid of Brotherhood, and the Simple Life," 1885—1895.**

(1) SHORT STORIES FOR THE PEOPLE; (2) CRUSADE AGAINST LUXURY; (3) TOLSTOY ON TEMPERANCE.

**I**T is no easy matter to select from among the extraordinary profusion of Tolstoy's contributions to the thought of his time, from among the ceaseless activities, I am tempted to say the prodigal affluence, of his intellectual output, that which is at once most important, most useful from the point of view of the average English reader, and that which Tolstoy himself would regard as most worthy of our serious attention. We are, however, all of us increasingly interested in the question of temperance and of the use of narcotics and of vegetarianism. To these subjects Tolstoy has directed the earnest attention of his readers and disciples all over Europe again and again. Tolstoy is a vegetarian; he is strongly opposed to the use of tobacco, and to a flesh diet. Either of these subjects might occupy an entire chapter. My object must rather be to deal with our

teacher's distinctive view. He would group together all these needless and, as he believes, harmful indulgences because he is sure that men resort to them in order to deaden or stupify themselves. I am confessedly making a choice among many of Tolstoy's later activities. I propose to say less of his wonderfully powerful and fascinating short stories and of his views on art, not because these are unworthy of special criticism, but because I feel sure that the subject of this chapter is more important in Tolstoy's view to the majority of the men whom he wishes to influence for good.

In the foregoing pages my chief aim and ambition has been to place in high relief his fundamental principles, and I venture once again to emphasise the fact that all Tolstoy's later developments, and all his conclusions on such questions as capital punishment, on flogging, on such dissimilar topics as the function of art, or the use and abuse of alcohol, are deductions from these fundamental principles. He has lived to give effect, and to help others to give effect, to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Let us recollect, then, that his assertion of the equality of all men, of the evils of an exclusive patriotism, his hatred of war and of capital punishment, his antipathy to alcohol, to tobacco, and to meals "of slain beasts, birds, and

fish," all alike depend on his view of the teaching and commandments of Christ as contained in the Sermon on the Mount, as expounded in *My Religion*. He does not stand before the world as an expert in all questions of mental and social science, still less as a man of leisure devoting his time to the writing of essays on up-to-date problems, but as a prophet who meets all inquirers into truth with the solemn reminder: *The Kingdom of God is within you*, therefore you must live in all things and at all times as members of that Heavenly Kingdom. As a recent German writer, Von Schrenk, has reminded us, the Kingdom of God does not imply all that we western people think of when we speak of citizenship. The idea of a republic or a democracy demanding the personal participation of every one of its constituent members in the tasks of government is an idea wholly foreign to the eastern mind. What it did teach, what it does certainly imply, is personal allegiance to the will and devotion to the service of the King. Tolstoy has always put forward that idea of the spiritual sovereignty of Jesus Christ. We are called upon in all the relations of life to ask whether what we propose, and what we do, will be according to the laws laid down by the great Law-Giver? Art, science, literature, and a hundred other avocations and possessions of civilised life,

may be good and may have their rightful uses, but they are all secondary. We dare not make them or any of them the main concern of life. To do so is to set up, whether consciously or not, a standard of life foreign to the spirit and teaching of Jesus. The great concern for us all should be, the one conscious aim of a Christian must be, to live a true life, to get the most out of life for the purposes that Jesus Christ had in view.

It seems to me that Tolstoy is growingly tolerant in his old age, tolerant in this, that he does not expect the world to accept all his teachings or to do exactly as he does. He is increasingly anxious that earnest men should take some decisive step in the right direction. He meets every right-minded man who wants to make his life tell mightily in the interests of righteousness and brotherhood as one who is himself far from being a perfect man, but as one who earnestly wishes to lead his brothers to a simpler, nobler, and more effective life as members of the Kingdom of God. He is now satisfied when he sees a disposition on the part of students of Christianity to take one first practical step in the direction of the embodiment of the essential principles of the Gospel.

### (I) SHORT STORIES FOR THE PEOPLE.

He would tell us, and on this I must pause for a few moments before touching on the special subject



of this chapter, that he himself has compromised the true wisdom in devoting so much of his leisure in later days to story-telling. During the ten years, from 1885 to 1895, he published, chiefly in the interest of the working people, a series of exquisite short stories, the writing of which occupied a portion of the time which he had now consecrated to the extension of the Kingdom of God. Nearly all these stories, are, however, instinct with spiritual purpose, and are among the helps to our faith and to our joy which we should be most loath to miss. But we may take it that as matter of fact he could not wholly repress the flow of his artistic genius. Well for us that he could not. Notwithstanding his aversion to fiction, he has given to the world during the period indicated fresh proofs that he continued in the possession of those great gifts which Matthew Arnold was one of the first to recognise, the attempted suppression of which, in favour of religious writings, he so earnestly deprecated. "So I arrive at the conclusion (he wrote in December, 1887) that Count Tolstoy has perhaps not done well in abandoning the work of the poet and artist, and that he might with advantage return to it." He did return to it, and may, in fact, be said never to have utterly abandoned it.

He began with a very powerful realistic tale,

*The Dominion of Darkness*, in which he exposes the vice and criminality of Russian village life. Among the short stories that I would specially recommend to my readers, and which are sure to win their hearts, are *Walk in the Light*, published in 1886, and *Master and Man*, which appeared in 1895. The latter story touchingly enforces the brotherhood of man. Artificial usages and social estrangements obscure a real affinity, and how much we lose by subservience to those anti-human conventions ! It is not only true that the same heart beats beneath the peasant's blouse and the gentleman's frock-coat, but that as soon as a working-man enjoys the unaffected and unpatronising comradeship of the man of culture and breeding, he naturally adopts all the gentle ways which are truly and naturally expressive of a courteous and kindly spirit. Lately I was spending an hour in one of the great London Mission settlements, and was so much impressed and even astonished by the courtesy of the young fellows about me that I remarked to one of the "workers," that their respectful manners astonished me. I was prepared for rough and ready good-humour, but scarcely for the prevalence of affability and gentleness in a crowd of young working-men, most of whom were collarless. "Why," said my guide, "they are nearly all gentlemen, many of

them on seven shillings a week, which will not buy a gentleman's coat, but they are gentlemen at heart and in their ways." That we are born here for love and not for hate, for mutual help and not for estrangement, for comradeship and not for scorn, is the teaching of the story. It is such a very simple story that after reading it we cannot fail but marvel at the art which produces such a profound impression by such scanty means. There is but one incident, and that one is sufficient for the great artist's purpose. A master and his man are lost in a snowstorm. When we start on the journey we are made to realise by a few sure touches that the master is utterly selfish, consumed by care for his own comfort, and utterly indifferent to that of his fellow-traveller. He is well-fed and covered with rugs. The poor peasant's ill-clad body is exposed to the bitter weather and to the storm which breaks in fury upon them as they journey. And now our disgust at the master is intensified by his wilful folly in starting out again when, having lost their way, and being hospitably received by dwellers in a neighbouring village, they are warned of the madness of attempting to reach their destination in such a snowstorm—a storm that had obliterated all the landmarks by which in ordinary weather they could direct their course. But the obstinate man, bent on accomplish-

ing his purpose, which was one of gain, and careless of the life of his attendant, drove out once more into the now featureless snow-fields.

Such a journey could scarcely have had any other end than that which ensued. They are overturned in the arctic solitude, as night drew on. The thoughts of Nikita, the peasant, as they lay helplessly freezing,—dying as he believed,—are those of a man not given to much reflection, but innured to hardship and habituated to obedience and acceptance of such things as the great disposer of events decreed. He was wholly and happily resigned, as Tolstoy believes that simple-hearted and right-living, unsophisticated people always are, in facing the facts of life and the mysterious fact of death. His last placid wish is that God's good will might be done.

To the master came a severer struggle, but it ended in a victory for his long-forgotten better self. In that supreme hour when he found himself face to face with the great realities—God, and death, and eternity—his last conscious feeling was one of great gladness that the poor despised Nikita lay beneath him, and that his own body was keeping the poor serving-man alive. "He remembers that Nikita is lying under him, and that he has got warm, and is alive; and it seemed to him that he is Nikita, and Nikita is he, and that his life is not in himself but in

Nikita. Nikita is alive," he said to himself triumphantly. "The master dies, but in saving his poor brother he saves his own soul."

I have attempted to give some idea in passing of Tolstoy's lighter contributions to literature during the decade following the year 1885. We cannot call them trivial, nor can we regard them as mere recreations of a writer otherwise devoted to the gravest moral problems, for each of these little stories has a moral, and a moral purpose which in no degree detracts from the perfection of the story as a work of art.

#### (2) TOLSTOY'S CRUSADE AGAINST LUXURY.

Our chief concern, however, with the period that we have now reached in our study of Tolstoy, is with the application of his main principles to the problem of Luxury.

He deals with the average, well-meaning man of the day who wants to do better than he is doing, to be a better man and a better Christian, but who is by no means sure of all that Tolstoy himself has deduced from the Sermon on the Mount. To all such he speaks, and as I find with tremendous force and power of conviction, in *The First Step*, published in 1892. I firmly believe that in this little book he speaks to us all and to good purpose. I too believe that most men are willing to be led in the right



direction, to take some one first step in the direction of a nobler life, if only someone will point the way. He speaks, then, to the man who has hitherto made personal pleasures his main concern in life. The man finds now that he is not satisfied with that plan of life, and that, in fact, he can no longer get pleasure out of luxuries enjoyed at the cost of suffering to others. Tolstoy's first assurance to him, and to us, is that having tried the luxurious life and the hard life, he prefers the latter, and that if we try to live more simply, we shall be every way better and happier. The first step is, in fact, a movement of the mind and heart. Learn self-control. He says roundly: "It is impossible for a man living in luxury to lead a righteous life." He believes that all true, real Christians have understood that. What means goodness and badness? It means this, that the more a man *gives*, the happier and the better he is. The *less he demands* from others for his own enjoyment, the better he is. *The more he consumes in self-gratification*, the worse he is.

It is possible to assent to this trenchant statement and exposition of that which makes the good and the evil man, and at the same time to reserve for consideration a question which lies at the root of ethics and religion, and which I have not seen convincingly discussed anywhere, namely: "What do I owe to

*myself?*” It is an utterly unworkable theory of life that every man should utterly neglect himself and his own well-being, while at the same time those who surround him, his friends and neighbours, are to be supremely concerned to secure that well-being. The question still remains, and I do not think that Tolstoy touches it: “What do I owe to *myself?*”

But in this I believe that we shall agree with our teacher, that all which tends to gratify selfish passion and to pamper the lower appetites means some loss of self-control, and self-control is the primary condition of a good and a successful life. He has his own trenchant, and at times, it must be confessed, grotesque way of putting things. In his later didactic works he has, as I think, sacrificed perfection of style in order to startle people into serious thought, very much as Carlyle startled his age by adopting a new, grotesque and exaggerated style in order to compel men to listen to his message. Listen, then, to Tolstoy as he describes the luxurious, not to say riotous, living of wealthy, fashionable people of our time. The day begins with “tea and coffee being drunk with great quantities of sugar; bread made of the finest wheat flour is eaten with large quantities of butter, and sometimes the flesh of pigs. Then leaving to others the task of setting right the soiled and disordered room, they go to their office or business,

or drive in carriages manufactured specially to move such people about. Then comes a luncheon of slain beasts, dessert and coffee, then playing at cards and playing music, or the theatre, or reading, or conversation, in soft, springy arm-chairs, by the intensified and shaded light of candles, gas, or electricity. After this again tea, again eating, and again to bed, shaken up and prepared with clean linen and washed utensils, to be again made foul." Somehow the world cannot and will not get past this man. He stirs up the sluggish conscience, and will not suffer it to be at ease. If he leaves on the mind in certain of his writings the idea that it is only upper and middle-class people who are wickedly luxurious in their manner of life, we know that he gives us a false impression, and is leading us off on a false tack. If the wealthy classes have led the way in luxury, the poorer have been mad to follow them. Multitudes of working-men hate the rich, not because they despise their luxury, but because they are unable to procure it for themselves. Tolstoy, albeit he has a partiality for the peasant class which facts hardly justify, has admitted that they are just as prone to excess when the means are at their disposal. Has he not said that "in the middle and lower classes it is perfectly evident that every festivity, every funeral or wedding, means gluttony?"

The conclusion to which we are invited is that provision for the lawful paramount needs of life is a comparatively easy thing. Our worst cares and troubles obviously arise out of our foolish endeavour to get things we do not need, and are generally better without. A man may live happily, a man may be gloriously well, physically and mentally, on bread, porridge and rice. When, however, you come to the flavourings and seasonings, when you make it your business to provide, not things essential to health but luxuries, when you devote your strength to get, not well-being but pleasure, there is no end to the time and expense that may be thus misapplied.

Tolstoy believes that it is not only cheaper to live on the fruits of the earth, but that flesh food is the prolific cause of disease, and that it unduly stimulates our basilar appetites. More than this, he urges that a man ought to know how his food is prepared. He has no right to enjoy what he could not enjoy, what neither his conscience nor his imagination would suffer him to enjoy, if he knew how it came to his table. He himself once visited a slaughter-house, and by conversation with the man whose horrid business it was to stab the "dumb-driven cattle," found that it was a task from which even the coarsest of men shrink. The man confessed that at first he

had been both afraid of his work and ashamed of it. Another butcher, a retired soldier, after making the usual excuse — that killing and eating flesh were “ordained” — confessed to the same feeling, “especially,” he added, “when they are quiet, tame cattle. They come, poor things, trusting you. It is very pitiful.”

In summing up his argument Tolstoy distinctly disavows the idea that in order to be moral, people must necessarily be vegetarians. No, but when you adopt a true and right view of life you cease to live to pamper appetite. So, then, a man tries to be abstinent, and the first thing he will abstain from, of all the things that are needless, is animal food obtained by killing. He is not sorry that the vegetarian cause makes slow progress. He believes that it will be all the surer that it is slow. It is rather ill-founded movements, such as appeal only to men’s vanity or fancy, that go up and come down like rockets.

In England, however it may be in Russia and abroad, some of us marvel that vegetarian principles gain ground as fast as they do. A few years ago a man who abstained from meat and restricted himself to vegetables, cereals, and dairy produce, was regarded as a hopeless faddist. No doubt the cause suffered from the adhesion of the weak and



sentimental section of society, who are always ready to take up a new movement because it is new, and who pride themselves on their eccentricity. We no longer look upon a man as a fool who abstains from meat. Thousands of abstainers—normally constituted people—find that they are much better in health, and that they can work better, whether with the mind or the hand, and with a delightful sense of vitality, and with an immunity from lethargy and weariness and headache, which is as delightful as it is new. "This movement," says Tolstoy, "should cause especial joy to those whose life lies in the effort to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, not because vegetarianism is in itself an important step towards that Kingdom, but because it is a sign that the aspirations of mankind towards moral perfection are serious and sincere, for it has taken the one unalterable order of succession natural to it, beginning with the first step."

This is what we should expect from a man who feels as strongly as he does that our first duty is to place at the disposal of the good cause of the world a body and a brain that are in fullest possession of all their powers of work.

### (3) "WHY DO MEN STUPEFY THEMSELVES?"

In a similar way he loses no time in getting to the root of the almost universal craving for alcohol and

tobacco. How is it, he asks, and would have us ask, that people fly to such dangerous poisons? I follow the course of his reasoning without debating the question: Is alcohol a poison? He brushes away the sort of answer which the average unthinking man makes to the question: Why do you drink, or why do you smoke? The man in question is supposed to answer: "Oh, come now, it cheers you up," or perhaps he says, "Oh, everyone smokes. It passes the time." Tolstoy generally succeeds in putting a question fairly, and in attacking the strongest fortress of the foe. In this instance I am not at all sure that he does so. I imagine that even if a man succeeds in misleading himself regarding his own pleasures, he, at all events, *thinks* that smoking and drinking afford him very real pleasure. He likes his pipe and his glass. It is a mistake to try to make out that the Havana weed, for example, is not a very choice delight to thousands. It is idle to question it.

Tolstoy is, however, certain that there must be deeper causes than those that men are so ready to acknowledge. Certainly he is on strong ground when he concludes that the temptation must be a very potent one that induces working-men to smoke and drink, when, as he points out, though their weekly wage barely suffices for the support of themselves and their families, they yet spend a considerable

portion of that wage on articles which are not to be reckoned among the necessities of life, on luxuries which they enjoy selfishly, and which are not shared by their wives and children. How is it that many an honest working-man, who enjoys a good character, spends on a selfish luxury money which is urgently needed for the proper clothing and nourishment of his children?

This is Tolstoy's answer: Life consists either in bringing our activities under the rule of conscience or in liberating them from its control. Now, as he believes, there is nothing which so surely yet subtly weakens and at last vitiates conscience as the habit of drinking alcohol and of smoking tobacco. In a word, he believes that men resort to alcohol and to nicotine for the sake of stupefying themselves. Most men will, I think, admit that once the habit is acquired, it is one which affords some relief from acute and troublesome sensations. It does tend to deaden our susceptibilities, to take the edge off our feelings. I think he is as clearly wrong in suggesting that men run to drink or to nicotine *in the first instance* in order to stupefy themselves. I suppose that there are cases where this happens, but the vast majority of men drink and smoke in the first instance because they like it, or expect to like it.

On the other hand, we are soon in closest accord

with him when he asserts that under the influence of excess in either direction men are not themselves, conscience speaks less clearly, the mind, and with it the judgment, acts sluggishly and indecisively. And if it be the case that under the influence of alcohol and of nicotine thought grows hazy and the will acts feebly, this fact should be sufficient to warn any man who values his manhood against indulgence, certainly in excess, in a habit which threatens his spiritual integrity.

I fear that it does not help the temperance cause or the crusade against smoking, to suggest that wine and tobacco do not afford the pleasure that most men say they get from both. Most readers will, I believe, demur to his assertion that men fly to stimulants or sedatives to escape from the control of their conscience. It is enough for us to recognise the indubitable fact that they begin to drink because they like it; that the habit grows, and the will becomes gradually enslaved. It is surely sufficient for us to recognise the terrible and undeniable fact which Tolstoy emphasises, that a drunkard is not ashamed to do things that a sober man is ashamed of, and that a large proportion of the crime at which we shudder is committed under the influence of alcohol, which affords unnatural courage to do unnatural things.

My impression is that Tolstoy's extreme and even morbid sensibility misleads him in regard to the feelings and temptations of average men. I do not hesitate to accept his assurance that in the days when he smoked, he did it for the sake of stupefying himself, but I doubt if there is one man in a thousand who smokes in order to dull the moral sense. I do not for a moment imagine that any ordinarily constituted man, who finds himself tempted to be lazy, or to hazard money which he cannot afford to lose, resorts to his pipe in order to soothe a troublesome conscience.

One of the grossest of fallacies results from making sweeping generalisations founded on the experiences and emotions of exceptionally endowed or exceptionally circumstanced individuals. I suggest that working-men's clubs should debate the question raised by Tolstoy: Why do we smoke? Ought we to smoke? Can we afford it? Is the habit really worth the expenditure it involves? Is it the case that we light a pipe or a cigarette when we want to do something wrong and to do it in peace? Granted that good women do not, or *did* not, smoke, and that bad women and imbeciles do, is it some strain of vice or imbecility in our blood which leads us to indulge in a habit which it is so extremely difficult seriously to defend? The wickedness of the wicked, and the



follies of the insane, certainly afford legitimate warning against excess, but leave the question of a moderate use untouched. In most matters we stand on our dignity as thinking, rational beings, but in relation to nicotine we abandon the fortress of reason and logic with a deprecatory smile. But this is certainly a serious question, especially for a working-man. It requires some strength of will deliberately to investigate the amount of money we spend yearly on drink and on tobacco.

Is the possible advantage to be derived from certain comfortable sensations procured by beer and tobacco to be preferred to the clothes, the furniture, the books, the holidays, which the money spent upon them would procure? It is surely a question full of pith and moment for every good-hearted workman: Should I spend on such a doubtful personal enjoyment so much money which is urgently needed in other directions, which would see the wife and children more warmly clad and better fed?

It is because I cannot accept Tolstoy's view of the question, because I do not for a moment believe that men commonly resort to alcohol or to tobacco with the deliberate intention of stupefying themselves, that in the interest of health and of economy I prefer to put the question in another way. Temperance has been sacrificed again and again to the exigence

of some extreme or eccentric point of view which it is simply impossible for the majority of men to occupy. It is the more to be deplored that Tolstoy should lay this heavy charge of deliberate tampering with conscience and duty at the door of every smoker and of every drinker, because I for one am profoundly convinced that his method of dealing with these questions is fundamentally sound. I mean that he makes his appeal to the individual heart and mind and conscience. Temperance is only retarded by foolish, impossible attempts to coerce men into total abstinence. Extremists who pretend that moderation is as bad as excess certainly damn more souls than they save. The educated classes have already been largely saved from drunkenness by the progress of education and religion. The only possible solution of the problem as regards the working-classes is by the gradual penetration of the same influences. It has been wisely, truly said, that the temperance question is really the "housing of the people" question. As the poor are better taught, better housed, better fed, not to speak of the all-powerful influences of the Spirit of God, the temperance question will be found to settle itself. It is not to be wondered at that so great a curse as that of drink should set men seeking for some rough and ready method which will suddenly transform the character and habits of a

people. But inasmuch as this question is really one of education and of character, there is no royal road to temperance. The only real reform is that which is effected in the man himself. The question of environment is of course one that we cannot afford to neglect. Let the principles of the Temperance League once "catch on," as we say ; let the nation once get a fair grip of the drink traffic, and rescue it from its most degrading associations ; let the sale of raw spirits that madden the drinker be made criminal ; let the State or the Municipality be empowered to safeguard the trade from the evils that are at present unhappily and in many cases needlessly associated with it ; let the inn-keeper's profits be made by food and non-intoxicants ; let houses where drink is sold be under the best and wisest supervision ; let such houses be closed early, and drunkenness in the public streets be made criminal as in Norway, and I venture to say that the transformation in England will be as wonderful and as beneficial as in Scandinavia. But let us remember that the improvement of the conditions of life will never save men, and that the ultimate appeal is that which Tolstoy makes to the manhood, to the heart and mind and conscience of the individual.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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### **Religion, Morality, and Art, 1895—1905.**

- (1) A QUESTION FROM A GERMAN ETHICAL SOCIETY: "CAN WE HAVE MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION?" (2) TOLSTOY'S ATTACK ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT. (3) THOUGHTS ON ART.

DURING the last twelve years Tolstoy's pen has not been idle. He still lives the same strenuous and alert life with which we have become familiarised, and, as was the case in regard to the previous decade, we have still no small difficulty in deciding which of his many contributions to the thought of our age is worthiest of special treatment. I venture to refer in the first place to a work on *Morality and Religion*, because it was written in answer to certain questions referred to him by a German society interested in the study of ethical questions. Not only were many members of the society which approached Tolstoy working-men, but the questions themselves are

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such as all thoughtful working-men are asking. It is a notable fact that they felt it to be worth while to put their questions to the great Russian thinker. I can only trust that there are thousands of working-men in England who, whether they are orthodox Christians, whether associated with church or chapel or not, are eagerly seeking for light, and in the same open-minded way. That there are many working-men in England strongly prejudiced against the Christian answer to these questions, because the churches are so far from being what they should be, is to be feared and deplored.

But the subject of religion is too vital, too tremendously important to every human soul, to be set aside because religious people are not all that they ought to be. The unhappy fact that so many Churchmen are too stiff, and many Nonconformists too self-satisfied, and too many churches too respectable or fashionable, is no good reason why we should conclude that Christianity is false or religion played out. It should go a long way with every thoughtful working-man, that the greatest scientific man of his age—Lord Kelvin—who so recently passed away from us, was firmly persuaded that the world was made and ruled by God, and that he was, in spite of the deficiencies of Christians, a



devout, prayerful Christian all through his long and honoured life.

I hope that my readers, who I trust will be largely from among the class of working-men, will not imagine that I want to lecture them, or that I imagine for one moment that the sins of their class are greater than the sins of those who from the point of view of money are better off. I have indeed written in vain if I have not given the impression that, with the great man and the great writer whose works we are studying together, I care nothing for classes and everything for humanity. But unhappily we are still divided into classes, the existence of which dooms multitudes to go through life in blinkers, and which always threatens to make a man less a man, in the large, true sense, than he would be if he stood aloof from sects and parties, and laboured only in the sole interest of humanity or of the Kingdom of God.

What, then, were the radical questions submitted by the German society to Leo Tolstoy? First they asked: What do you mean by religion? Secondly: Is it possible to have a morality independent of religion?

We know only too well the sort of answer which these questions receive from party men, from the orthodox, who are too conventional in their views

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and prejudices to think fairly, and from the so-called rationalist or free thinker, who is so often deficient in sympathy and in imagination and spiritual intuition. It is a splendid thing to be brought into contact with one of the world's really *free thinkers*, who is free to accept even an orthodox conclusion should it happen to approve itself as a true one, who does not mind being called a mystic by the rationalist, or a sceptic by the orthodox. I do not think, indeed, that he does sufficient justice to the Church on the one hand, or to the achievements of science on the other, but it is refreshing to come into close touch with a man who dares to be himself—who has seen his vision and lived in the light thereof. There are so many men who like to call themselves free thinkers, who have never really thought things out for themselves at all, who have never clothed their rather vague dislike of religion, or hazy impression that Christianity is based on fraud, in the “decencies of a syllogism.”

Tolstoy tells his German questioners, and he tells us, whatever our preconceptions, that religion is no old-world, played-out force, no straight jacket for the restriction of the human spirit. No! religion is the greatest of all facts and forces, and no outlived phase in the development of humanity. Religion

is not to be confounded with a system of incomprehensible abstractions to be believed on peril of damnation, neither is it a series of supernatural events proposed for blind acceptance on insufficient historic evidence.

Religion arises naturally and inevitably in the mind of man. Every man lives under the more or less efficient control of a voice of God within him. He can't escape from the Divine, because the Divine is in and of him. God has a grip of his inmost being. So when he begins to think, he can't be satisfied simply to follow the leading of his passions and appetites; he is bound sooner or latter to ask: How came I here? What am I doing? What ought I to do? A man, unless he ceases to be rational, must think this out, and religion is the realisation of his actual relation to the world in which he lives. "True Christianity," he says, "investigates the conditions enabling a man to know the demands of the Supreme Will." Morality, on the other hand, he conceives as the conduct which answers to, or corresponds with, our religious belief.

Broadly speaking, there are in his view only two religions, that which places the individual at the centre and tells him that the world exists for his pleasure and advantage, which issues in Pagan morals or in selfishness; and there is the Christian

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view of life, which is that we exist for the good of the world—that it is God's will that we should love our brothers and live for them as Christ did.

It is good for us to realise that morals spring from a religious source, that religion is the only real basis of morality. To understand this we have but to realise that we must, if we think at all, postulate some relation in which we ought to stand to the universe. We must know where we stand and what we are made for; in other words, we must have religion before we can fulfil our duty. The more of God there is in our conception and view of life, the better our life will be. The more of self there is in it, the lower and meaner life will be.

To assert, as some have unthinkingly asserted, "that a social process produces morality, is like asserting that the construction of stoves produces heat." Heat is derived from the sun, and stoves produce heat only when the fuel is put into them. Even so morality is derived from religion. The thought that masters self comes from God, and is the inspiring force of righteousness. With the kind of vain religion which consists in believing unverifiable ideas which, even if they could be verified, would leave men no better than they found them, he has no sort of concern. Real, that is effective, religion means better thinkers, better workers, better

brothers. Morality without religion is, he thinks, impossible. It is like believing in flowers without soil, and those who try to produce, or who imagine that they can produce the flower of a lovely life without religion, act as little children who pluck a flower that pleases their fancy, tear it from its root, and then stick the stalk into the ground in the hope that it will grow.

(2) "SHAME! THE SHAME OF CORPORAL  
PUNISHMENT."

Once more we are called to turn from the enunciation of great principles to their application. Tolstoy felt that one of the most degrading features of life in Russia was the very general use of *corporal punishment*. All attempts to coerce and to use physical force, whether as punishments or with a view to improving character, were, he believed, utterly immoral and utterly futile. It was to him a specially bitter thought that in this respect public opinion was distinctly retrograde, and that a better, wiser, and more humane spirit had prevailed seventy years earlier. He tells us in a tract, whose arresting title is *Shame*, that between 1820 and 1830 the officers of a certain regiment decided to have no recourse to corporal punishment. The officer of a certain company, however, declared that one of



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his men could not be tamed and kept in subjection in any other way. He was accordingly transferred to the company of one of the officers who thoroughly believed in the reform. The man proceeded to justify the received opinion of his character by stealing another soldier's boots, by getting drunk on the proceeds, and making a disturbance. He was called out before his comrades. The officer told him how very badly he had behaved, but that he would not be punished, and that he, the officer, would pay for the boots. The man, thus let off, promptly got drunk again, fought, and was again publicly reprimanded. The officer told him that he was his own worst enemy, begging him to steal and fight no more. The man was so overcome by this repeated kindness that he proceeded to astonish everybody by turning over a new leaf, and becoming a thoroughly changed character. Yet after seventy-five years, a form of punishment which men of superior intelligence had come to regard as a relic of barbarism and a shameful blot on the civilisation and humanity of the nation was on the increase, and magistrates could still be found to discuss whether such-and-such a full-grown man, the father of a family, and perhaps a grandfather, should be flogged, and how many stripes he should receive? This he regards as

a proof, not a solitary one, indeed, but a sufficient one, that society in Russia has incalculably retrograded. On the other hand, the mental and moral plane of the peasant class has so far risen, that corporal punishment has become for them not only a physical but a moral torture. He knows cases where peasants committed suicide rather than endure it. It is necessary to point out that it is long since, except perhaps in the Navy, any offences save those of violence have been punishable in this country by flogging. The idea of corporal punishment is utterly abhorrent to any cultured mind. It revolts the moral sense. We tolerate the thought of it only in the case of a man who has become so utterly brutalised that we believe him capable of feeling physical but not moral pain. But the administration of such torture brutalises those who inflict, even if it can no further brutalise those who endure, and while society must protect itself against crimes of brutal violence, it is year by year more sensitive to the fact of its own corporate responsibility for the existence in the heart of our civilisation of beings little better than wild beasts. It is, as Tolstoy urges, a sin to legalise a shameful, savage, and indecent outrage against humanity. We in this country are chiefly interested in the final and complete abolition of this relic of barbarism in our public schools. As one

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who believes that our public schools are a national institution of which we have exceptional reason to be proud, and the value of which is now recognised by astute German educationalists, I trust that the day is now not far distant when a practice for which nothing remains to be said will become a thing of the past. Corporal punishment is supported only by arguments of so belated a character that, were they enforced, they would serve to revive all the discarded brutalities of Rugby when Arnold initiated his great reform. Boys can be made manly without being bullied and ragged. There is no shred of sound evidence that flogging is necessary to the good order of a school, while there is an ever-increasing mass of evidence to prove that the fewer punishments of any kind that obtain, the better the tone and discipline of a school. Schools where brutality is done away with are, other things being equal, better managed, and have a finer tone than those in which the old traditional, indecent outrages are still perpetrated. Public opinion begins to make itself felt even in regard to the working of our public schools, and at the moment it wants only a strong and enlightened lead on the part of some great "Head," to bring the old system toppling to the ground. To-day thoughtful parents recognise the immeasurable superiority of the schools which are

marked by a high moral tone and by intellectual distinction. The reform is not likely to commence with either Eton or Harrow, but there is a fine opportunity for the great schools which stand so far ahead of them in every respect but that of a wealthy *clientèle*, Winchester and Rugby pre-eminently among the older, and Cheltenham and Marlborough among the Victorian schools. It requires, I say, but the strong, decisive action of the head of one of these schools to prove that discipline can be better maintained without than by recourse to brutalities that are really as degrading to him who inflicts as to the boy who suffers them. It may be said without fear of contradiction that a boy who cannot be kept in order without a cane is either mentally or morally deficient, and ought not to be in a public school at all.

### (3) "WHAT IS ART?"

Among the works of his later age that call for special remark is one which many of his admirers regard as his greatest critical achievement, his work on Art.

It is, indeed, with an acute sense of unfitness that we pass by sudden transition from so uncongenial a subject as that of corporal punishment to that most welcome theme of Art. Our sense of the harshness

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of the transition will serve, however, to remind us of the variety of the subjects to which this vast and encyclopædic intellect was turned during the decade under review, and of the zest with which he threw himself into the most diverse intellectual employments.

The question arises: Is this a working-man's subject? Is not the nature of Art one of those questions which might fitly be left out of account when dealing with work so manifold and multiform as Tolstoy's? That a majority of readers would answer in the affirmative there is little doubt, but to Tolstoy, and it is with his view of the subject that we are alone concerned, the matter presented itself in a wholly different light. He wrote on Art in order to demonstrate, if possible, that the recon-dite and exclusive Art which the learned chiefly enjoy, and to which many of them would alone allow the name, is the least admirable. He wishes to suggest and establish a view of Art according to which only that is really to be admired which appeals with powerful and arresting force to man as man. Increasingly out of humour with the specialised pursuits and enjoyments of his own class, he seeks to dismiss, as unhealthy and immoral, the kind of books, the kind of poetry and romance, the kind of statues and pictures which cultured people enjoy.



The best things are those which God makes free to all, the air and the sunshine, the flowers and the green fields, and for the sustenance and refreshment of physical life, the fruits of the earth. The pleasures and preferences of artificial people, he condemns. God's good things are those that unspoiled natures most freely and unaffectedly and inevitably enjoy. Art is, then, a subject for working people. Because they are in their tastes unspoiled, they are much better critics of Art than those whose trade is to criticise it.

I cannot, of course, in a few short paragraphs do justice to an elaborate argument in the course of which Tolstoy ventures to set forth the views on Art of the greatest Art critics of all nations, but it is possible, I trust, to interest working-men in the subject, even though their modesty would shrink from accepting his view of their superior fitness to appreciate all that is really most beautiful in a sphere that is perhaps strange to them. It was for working-men largely that our Art Galleries were thrown open on Sundays. It is for them, as well as others, to say what books shall be written, what buildings erected, what plays performed, with what pictorial advertisements our hoardings shall be adorned. All good citizens are concerned in all these things.

There is a sad possibility that we cannot neglect

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that those who have the least of the beautiful in their daily lives, and who need beauty more than all, are least conscious of the want, and are even disinclined to waste their time, as they would put it, in discussing what does not interest them. Tolstoy would at once overrule their objection by assuring them that Art is not, as they presuppose, specially concerned with the beautiful, neither does it exist, in his view, simply to please. It is, as he thinks, the fundamental fallacy in regard to Art to suppose that its chief concern is to reveal beauty. He has carefully studied the works of the great Art critics, and he proves, I think conclusively, that there has been the most extraordinary diversity of view as to what beauty essentially is. It seems to resolve itself into a question of personal preference. That is beautiful, people generally say, which gives us pleasure. How shall we decide whether or not Mr. Bernard Shaw is a great artist? Mr. Bernard Shaw assures us that he is. Many of his admirers, and he has many, tell us that his works afford them pleasure. They afford me pleasure. Therefore on the basis of the generally-accepted theory of Art, he must be an artist. On the same principle, however, many readers would arrive at an opposite conclusion. They would say that they recognise no beauty in his writings. They are not attracted. They are not pleased, and would be

justified in concluding that Mr. Bernard Shaw is not an artist. We seem to be struggling amid the shifting sands of caprice and predilection, of fancies and preferences of which no one can say whence they come or whither they go.

Tolstoy will have nothing to say to this criterion of Art, inasmuch as men cannot agree in their definition of the beautiful. Beauty is elusive. If we do not know what it is, it does not help us to understand Art to say that it is an exponent of that of which, and of whose nature, we know nothing.

I should like to point out that a precisely similar objection could reasonably be urged against Tolstoy's constant appeal to conscience. Neither morals nor religion can be understood or explained without reference to that voice of the spirit of which we can say as little as of our God-given sense of beauty. It has indeed been urged and questioned by what right conscience seizes the helm of the vessel of life, presuming to arbitrate among all our faculties and actions ; and all we can say, and all we need to say, is that God made it so. It has the same right to guide conduct as the eye has to see, or the ear to hear, or the hand to grasp. The supreme facts are those of which we are most poignantly conscious, and of which, at the same time, we can give no adequate explanation. Men differ, indeed, as to the

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things that are right and the things that are wrong, as they differ in regard to what things are beautiful and what ugly, but that beauty has a surer throne than the caprice of individuals or the predilection of a particular nation or a particular period is, I think, sufficiently proved by the progress or advance of taste along ascertainable lines. It is possible for a New Guinea cannibal to love to be adorned by the bones of the enemies whom he has despatched and consumed. It is impossible for an Englishman to be pleased by such things. There is a sense of beauty belonging to our spiritual nature as surely as there is a sense of right and wrong, and the God-given faculty determines the direction of the development alike of our appreciation of conduct and our appreciation of beauty—of what is right, and of what is lovely. It is unthinkable that men should ever revert to the primitive taste for savage art.

How, then, does Tolstoy define Art? He tells us that it is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, helps others to feel that which he has felt. Tolstoy believes that all our activities, those of the artist as well as those of the tradesman, are subject to the eternal law of righteousness, and that only that art is "good" which tends to excite good and noble feelings. It is true, also, and it is the fundamental

fact in regard to Art, that its peculiar province and aim is the beautiful. Tolstoy does good service by calling attention to the infectiousness of Art, to the fact, for fact it is, that only as the artist is inspired, can he make powerful and successful appeal to us. Deep feeling is always infectious. The really great artist feels so deeply that, unaware of art in the way he tells a story, he tells it so forcibly and so convincingly that we are carried away by the very emotions that have mastered him.

To Tolstoy, then, true Art or good Art is that which conveys helpful and noble feelings, but while we may follow him in asserting that the pursuit of beauty should always be subordinate to the pursuit of truth and righteousness, we do not feel called with him to confound that which is morally and that which is æsthetically good. One of his own illustrations will, I think, help us to grasp the real relation between the two, and at the same time to avoid the possibility of confounding them. The great end, as he says, in eating is nourishment, and not the pleasing of a dainty palate. Granted ; but I suppose that the Creator gave us a palate, or a sense of taste, to make eating and drinking pleasant. Pleasure is in this sense utilitarian, that it is a help to good digestion. There is a similar connection between Art and morals. The morality of a book is infinitely more important



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than its power to please, but if Art has a function of its own it is to invest the subject with which it deals with delight. St. Paul has expressed this in his exhortation: "Let everyone please his neighbour for his good," and I know not that the function of Art, in its relation to religion and morality, can better be brought home to us than by recalling the fact that we can all do our work better when the sun shines than when the world is enveloped in fog. We easily rise to the level of our best life when those about us are kindly, gentle, cheerful, and considerate. The men who play drums and fifes do not fight, but every soldier marches more bravely to the conflict for their music.

We may, indeed, allow that the highest æsthetic beauty is only attainable when the artist deals with the noblest and most elevating themes, and that in consequence the highest art has always been inspired by religion, and consecrated to its service, but the two spheres are distinct.

I venture to urge that this subject is one of real importance to working-men, though in England they at present too generally neglect and, I fear, despise it. A widespread and false impression prevails, which makes many working-men impatient of Art. They think it means affectation, display, and extravagance. They think that Art is a pastime for

the rich, which cannot concern men who have all they can do to make two ends meet.

Let me say two things. First, there are two ways of doing everything—a right and a wrong—a beautiful and a repulsive way, and if that is so, surely we may as well endeavour to do what we do in the best way possible. Secondly, a fine and noble manner is not necessarily extravagant. Money has as often been spent on bad and mean work as on that which is really beautiful. Indeed it will be admitted that whereas money cannot command beauty, really great Art is possible only when the people understand it and demand it. Art in England is really waiting for the growth of the spirit of joyful appreciation of the beautiful in the great working class. The time will come when the workmen of England will see to it that our great artists no longer spend their best strength in designing palaces for the rich, or in painting pictures for their walls. They will want the greatest attainable Art for our great national and municipal buildings, such work as our supreme inspirer, Frederick Watts, did for us, as far as we would let him. Those whom he inspires will, in coming days, give us great churches, palaces, theatres, halls, which will be the joy and pride of the cities which they adorn.

There lurks in some minds the curious idea that

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we could if we would dispense with Art, and that time is wickedly wasted in making things beautiful. It is especially a characteristic of degenerate, decadent, modern Puritanism to get red in the face, and to emulate Ephesian clamour, when some writer or speaker urges that Art is by divine appointment the handmaid of religion. Surely this in some measure accounts for the fact that our "Chapels" are in so many cases a blot on the district in which they stand, justifying the saying: "Nonconformists do not know how to build." How should they when they even refuse to discuss the question of Art in their assemblies? We have the same wearisome subjects repeated, session after session, which no one wants to hear discussed save for the exceptional eloquence of favourite speakers. Yet if even a respected and able leader dares to raise the question, how to express the spirit of worship more fitly, or how to build our churches, both for the glory of God and the good of the worshipper, he is met with the truculent retort: "We will see that the time of the Union is not wasted on such questions." Little wonder if under the unhappy spell of the current impression that spirituality and spontaneity are the same thing, worship has in many of our assemblies become a lost art.

A more shameful spectacle can scarcely be seen

anywhere than is to be seen in some of our ecclesiastical gatherings. "Prayer" is being offered, or someone tries to offer it, on the platform, on which a solitary kneeling figure may often be seen, while the rustling of newspapers, the scarcely-suppressed hum of conversation, the banging of doors, proclaim the fact that we know how to discuss and exhort, but that the spirit of worship and the beauty of holiness are very far from us. These eyes have seen all this. These ears have listened to the pathetic appeal, made seemingly in vain, that in "coming to the King we should remember our courtly manners." If we neglect the decorous use and the august and seemly ritual of religion, the spirit of adoration will depart from us. "Of what use are forms which are sometimes empty forms?" asked a wise man. "Of the same use," he said, "as vessels which are also sometimes empty, but which it is in our power to fill." Nothing of essential truth and worth is to be expected from communities which exist simply to perpetuate prejudice. Our hope is rather in an educated working-class, which will certainly be supremely indifferent to the prejudices of sectarianism, but which, thank God, is yet religious, even Christian, at heart, and which is capable of that highest culture which is only another word for religion—I mean the cultivation of an all-round, a full-orbed manhood, the consecration of the

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physical, the intellectual, the emotional, the æsthetic and the moral faculties. "This," said Matthew Arnold, "is why the spectacle of ancient Athens has such profound interest for a rational man : that it is the spectacle of the culture of a *people*. . . ." It was the *many* who relished those arts, who were not satisfied with less than those achievements. Why should *our* democracy, as compared not only with that of ancient Athens, but with the peoples of southern Europe, to-day be aptly described as "acute and energetic," but "tasteless, narrow-minded, and ignoble ?"



## CHAPTER XIV.

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### "Excommunication."

IN 1899 Tolstoy published his last great work of fiction, *Resurrection*, which, in spite of many sordid details and its bold attack on generally accepted institutions in Church and State, achieved European fame. He wrote in this instance confessedly to make money. He did this in defiance of his own principles, in order that he might be able by the proceeds of his book to help the persecuted Doukhobors. This being the case, it is not to be wondered at that he chose for his theme the abuse of legal and ecclesiastical institutions. He tells us in the novel nothing that he has not said before, but he creates a more powerful impression by inspiring us with a deep and poignant sympathy for poor Katusha, the victim, first of a man's selfish passion, and then of the crude forms of organised "justice," and of the incompetence or heartlessness of its ministers. With relentless realism he exposes the sores of society, the venalities of the law, the corruptions and superstitions of the Church. Katusha falls as low as a woman can fall. She is falsely accused of murder.

Her "trial" is a legal farce. The judges and counsel know perfectly well that nothing has been proved against her, yet, in consequence of technicalities which have nothing to do with the rights and wrongs of the case, she is transported to Siberia. Nekhludov, her penitent betrayer, sat, as fate would have it, among the jurors. Tormented by remorse, he determined, if she would consent, to marry her. In order to expiate as far as possible the sin that weighed so heavily upon his heart, he followed her into exile. It is amid the extraordinary scenes of a life so new and so miserable, and while bent upon repairing the wrong he had done, that he realises, as it was not possible for him to do when surrounded by the accustomed luxuries of the class into which he was born, and whose prejudices he had inherited, the emptiness of society, the cruelty of legal "justice," and the utter futility of the consolations of religion as administered by a Church whose tenets were incredible, and whose worship was an anachronism.

With his arraignment of the Russian criminal system we have no intimate concern, but as Christians we are concerned with his terrible indictment of the Church of Christ in Russia, which by itself would have sufficed to make this book famous, and as students of Tolstoy we are concerned

with its probably inevitable consequence, his excommunication from the Russian Church.

It is indeed a terrible indictment that this great State Church, called to minister the Gospel of Christ to ninety millions of peasants, has failed to do it. Tolstoy believes that the teaching of Jesus Christ alone will enlighten the mind and purify the heart, yet this Church appears to him to have no consuming passion of love to Him. The people are hypnotised by gorgeous ceremony, and lulled to sleep by the droning of prayers. They do not know Him by whose name they are called. In the light of the life-work of Father John of Kronstadt, we know that this is only one side, the dark side, of things in the Russian Church. The Gospel is not denied to the people, and there are true servants of Jesus Christ there who live for nothing else but to reveal its power.

The fair and candid critic realises the root of all the unintentional injustice of Tolstoy's indictment. To him the Sermon on the Mount is the sum and substance of Christianity. To tens of thousands of serious and devout men and women, He who uttered those precepts and set forth the higher righteousness of the Kingdom of God was Himself God manifest in the flesh, who came not only, and not so much, to teach great ethical laws as to forgive sin, and to

inspire sinners with the love which alone makes possible the noblest forms of righteousness. To one who regards the Sermon on the Mount as containing the whole of Christianity, the Russian Church seems to merit nothing but condemnation for her comparative indifference to the ethical precepts of Christ. Those of us who see other truths, and who realise transcendent spiritual blessings and hopes in the Gospel of Christ, to which the Russian Church is not indifferent, are unable to approve his contemptuous rejection of her claims to be an exponent of the mind of Christ, still less of his somewhat coarse satire of her sacramental worship.

Nothing is really known from the outside, and Tolstoy has the defects of his great qualities. Truths he sees at all, he sees more clearly than others see them. The other side of things is for him as though it existed not. His great sin against good taste, and against the charity which respects the convictions of others, is his contemptuous satire of the celebration of the Liturgy or Mass. To him it is a meaningless mummerly. It is to be feared that it can be little better to multitudes in Russia, both amongst the educated and the illiterate, for if the Church has not led the people to Christ what can they see in the broken bread or the outpoured wine but empty signs? On the other hand, the spiritual significance

of the Sacrament is necessarily veiled to such as see in Christ no more than a Teacher of morals. The Sacrament is truly blessed if to our faith and in our experience, He is "the Bread of Life." The first words of the notorious description of the Eucharist to the prisoners sufficiently indicate the character of the whole. "The essence of the service consisted in the supposition that the bits of bread cut up by the priest, and put by him into the wine, when manipulated and prayed over in a certain way, turned into the flesh and blood of God." But I cannot find it in my heart to transcribe the satire. Such, no doubt, is the Sacrament, regarded as a mere manipulation and incantation, and when divested of its spiritual significance. Because I believe Tolstoy to be one of the best and bravest of men, I am driven to the conclusion that with all his clearness of thought, he has little power to appreciate the poetry of religion.

The world is but heaps of stupid stone, and the sea a mass of aqueous drops to a dull mind and to an unspiritual observer. How can we express the mystery of the spell by which in the summer-time our whole being is enchained by the beauty of Nature? If we investigate the scene before us, and let our minds rest upon its component features, we find ourselves enumerating a vast assortment of dull and utterly uninspiring, and frequently even repulsive,



things. Masses of sand, heaps of rock, quantities of water, have no beauty in them, and the further we carry our analysis, and the longer we dwell upon the ultimate forms of matter as recent science reveals them to thought, the more obvious does it become that "mere matter," affords no clue to the mysterious spell by which Nature fascinates and holds us entranced and breathless while we gaze upon her. Surely God is in His world, clothing Himself with beauty as His garment. There are truly some beholders who, having eyes, see nothing but the material of creation, to whom there is nothing in all this universe of God but dead things and blind forces, to whom there is nothing anywhere but that which meets the eye or ear, and to such all Sacraments, because of this insensibility to the real, because of this sad absorption in the phenomenal world, are mere empty signs. Whereas to thousands of weary toilers, into whose grey lives no gleam of sunlight streams, whose daily tasks are irksome, whose homes are dreary, whose work is done under crushing conditions of bodily pain and mental distress, the high hour of communion with the present Christ, the trysting-place of saints with the beloved Saviour and an innumerable company of redeemed souls in Heaven and on earth, is a joy unspeakable, and an earnest and prelibation of an

eternal weight of glory. The Sacrament, even when they are least disposed or able to define its power, is to them, as to St. Paul, a "Communion of the body and blood of Christ."

To Tolstoy, unhappily, the Sacrament is a mere performance, and frankly, we cannot wonder that it is so to so many thousands throughout Europe. If the Church ceases to be a spiritual society, if her ministers are content to treat her most sacred services as rites which they perform for pay, if they neither live the life themselves nor lead their people to love God and to walk in the light of Christ, it is inevitable that as soon as men begin to think for themselves they will revolt against the faith as an empty form or childish superstition. There are priests and priests in Russia, but Mackenzie Wallace gives us what is, I fear, a picture all too true of the low condition to which the peasant clergy, the secular priesthood of Russia, has fallen. "Can the people respect the clergy," he asks, "when they hear how one priest stole money from below the pillow of a dying man at the moment of Confession; how another was publicly dragged out of a house of ill-fame; of how a third christened a dog; how a fourth, whilst officiating at the Easter Service, was dragged by the hair from the altar by the Deacon? Is it possible for the people to respect priests who spend their time in the gin-

shop, write fraudulent petitions, fight with the Cross in their hands, and abuse each other in bad language at the altar? . . . If we add to all this the false certificates which the clergy give to those who do not wish to partake of the Eucharist, the dues illegally extracted from the old Ritualists, the conversion of the altar into a source of revenue, the giving of churches to priests' daughters as a dowry, and similar phenomena, the question as to whether the people can respect the clergy requires no answer." The feeling of the peasants towards the clergy is sufficiently indicated by the fact that they spit when they see a priest in the street, whereas they will humbly kiss his robe or his hand while in the fulfilment of his sacred functions in the Church. The happiest event for Russia would have been the fidelity of Tolstoy to his earlier position in regard to the Church. Had he been content to remain in her fold, intent on rescuing the people from superstition and the priesthood from their abysmal sloth and ignorance, he would have reformed the Russian Church. It is the saddest circumstance of Tolstoy's career that he has scoffed from without, whereas he might have carried on a work of incomparable beneficence and regeneration from within the fold. My conviction is deepened on re-reading his *Appeal to the Clergy* in 1902. What he says of the sins of the priesthood in the

past, and of their neglect to teach Scripture history in the light of modern knowledge, to-day, their blind and slothful adherence to methods of teaching fit only to impose upon the very young or the very ignorant, is so true. I know well that some English Protestants will be only too ready to retort that Tolstoy was right in utterly rejecting the superstitious Church of Russia, though he would have been wrong in forsaking the Protestant Church had he lived in England or in Germany.

Then hear what he himself has to say touching the supposed superiority of Western over Eastern Europe: "But that the promulgation of superstition applies to Russia, is what Western Europeans—Catholics and Protestants—will say. But I think that the same, if not worse, is happening in Catholicism, with its prohibition of the Gospels and its *Nôtre-Dames*; and in Protestantism, with its holy idleness on the Sabbath day and its bibliolatry—that is, its blind belief in the letter of the Bible."

We must certainly allow what no one acquainted with Tolstoy's strength and dauntlessness would dream of denying, that he had all the courage of his perilous convictions. His social and religious works were such as would have condemned another man less illustrious and beloved of the people to

exile in Siberia. As it is, the Holy Synod has been content to pursue a somewhat half-hearted course in regard to him. They tampered with his correspondence, and set spies to watch him; and at last the attack on the celebration of the Liturgy, contained in his novel, *Resurrection*,—which account, together with many of his bitterest invectives against the orthodox faith, was printed on fly-sheets, and being sold for a farthing, had an enormous circulation,—decided them to issue an edict of excommunication against him in February, 1901. "That day," he is reported by a recent visitor to have said, "was the happiest of my life." To this edict he published a reply in the following April. He declares his condemnation to be arbitrary inasmuch as nearly all educated people share his disbelief, he convicts it of falsehood in asserting that efforts had been made by the Church to show him his errors, whereas no such effort was made, and finally he declares it to be an incentive to evil feelings and deeds, in attempting to stir up anger and hatred against him, "culminating in threats of murder expressed in letters" that he received. One writes, and I think Tolstoy was not sorry to let the world know how hateful the spirit of orthodoxy could be: "Now thou hast been anathematised, and after death wilt go to everlasting torments, and wilt



perish like a dog . . . anathema upon thee, old devil . . . be damned."

But his answer breathes only the spirit of calm, unruffled criticism of the document. If the Holy Synod could be exasperated, surely it would be by Tolstoy's unimpassioned, judicial rejoinder. He sits in judgment on his accusers, and deals with their edict as dispassionately as though it touched no one less nearly than himself. "So that," he sums up, "the Synod's edict is very bad." Nor can one doubt that his motives were entirely pure in all that he wrote on the subject of religion and of the Church, even when we most keenly regret his attitude. He says that he renounced the Church called orthodox, not because he had risen against the Lord, but on the contrary only because with all the strength of his soul he wished to serve Him. To follow his rejoinder point by point would be proper were this a theological treatise, but would involve discussions uncalled-for here. He reaffirms his antagonism to the sacraments and ritual of the orthodox Church, which serve in his view to obscure the teaching of Christ, and he concludes by quoting Coleridge's words: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself (his own peace) better than all." "I

travelled," he says, "the contrary way. I began by loving my orthodox faith more than my peace, then I loved Christianity more than my Church, and now I love truth more than anything in the world. And up to now, truth, for me, corresponds with Christianity as I understand it. And I hold to this Christianity; and to the degree in which I hold to it I live peacefully and happily, and peacefully and happily approach death."

## CHAPTER XV.

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### **The Great Renunciation.**

**T**OLSTOY is one of those men whose personality arrests attention. We may not like him, or agree with him. We cannot be indifferent either to him or to his mission. We feel a keen desire to be able to picture the outstanding personality of a man who has dared to follow Jesus Christ in literal obedience in our own day, and who has paid the price of his own strong convictions and frank criticism of generally-received opinions, and of the social conventions.

A figure of heroic proportions, idolised by his disciples, and depreciated by hostile criticism, he seems always either strongly to attract or repel his readers. It is the same with the few who have been privileged to set eyes on this remarkable person. They one and all come away with an impression of having conversed with a man of extraordinary capacity and force of character, conscious to himself of being in harmony with the truth of things.

The question which presents itself to all students of Tolstoy's ethical works is, of course, no other than that of his personal integrity. How does this man

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stand in relation to his own exceptional standard of morality? To most sober-minded Englishmen his utter disbelief in Governments is simply insane, his trust in the eternal laws and inspirations latent in every human soul unpractical. "Be," said Amiel, "that which you would make others." Has this man achieved the entire renunciation of self which his principles demand? Does he lead the way? Is he setting us the required example?

The greatest of contemporary writers, who has made a serious study of the problem—Merejkowski—who, it is said, once regarded Tolstoy as the messiah of these latter days, believes that he has failed.

Merejkowski's view is that Tolstoy simply gravitated from the order into which he was born into that to which he essentially and individually belongs by virtue of his tastes and his temperament. You look at his face as portrayed in so many photographs and paintings, and see before you an aged peasant of patriarchal mien, idolised by his admirers, who try to think of him as a recluse and an ascetic. In fact he is patriarchal after the old Hebrew type, whose ruling passion is for fair fields, pasturage, peasants, flocks, and herds. Tolstoy makes no renunciation. He simply gravitates. When he seeks to universalise the law of bread-labour he

unconsciously extols a preference, standing as he does not more by force of reasoned conviction than of his inborn affinities for the primitive and the uncultivated in life. "Even now, in the figure of Tolstoy at seventy, that harsh, material, almost coarse peasant visage, that figure, which he himself and others have tried in vain to make appear that of a subdued, repentant, and ethereal leader of modern thought, I recognise the not unfleshly sanctity, the comely dignity of one of the old patriarchs, who led their flocks and herds from well to well through the desert, and rejoiced in their posterity, 'more numerous than the sands of the sea.'" This is, it must be confessed, an extremely interesting as it is an original view of the character and issue of Tolstoy's genius.

That he is a man whose physical powers and whose sensuous nature are abnormally strong must be granted, and I think that in the foregoing pages we have recognised an intimate and unfailing connection between the stages of his spiritual development and the ebb and flow of his physical powers.

This, then, furnishes to a critic like Merejkowski an indispensable and trustworthy clue to his philosophy of life. If for the last twenty years he has lived in retirement, if he has abandoned art for philosophy,



and if his favourite theme now is the fruitlessness of a life given to pleasure, or to art, or to wealth, or lived under the influence of any of the master passions of humanity, it is because his own vitality failed, because his own hold on health, and his own consciousness of maturing powers, grew feeble.

Then he began to dwell on the thought of death, until it became an obsession. He was less appalled by the thought of extinction of being, or of passing from the seen into the unseen world, than by the deterioration of the body. "What is the meaning of getting on in years?" asks Tolstoy in 1894. "It means that your hair is coming out, your teeth decaying, wrinkles are coming, your breath unpleasant. Even before all comes to an end, or becomes dreadful and repulsive, you became conscious of red and white in the wrong places, sweat, bad odour, loss of bodily shape. Where is that of which I was the servant? Where is beauty gone? All is gone; nothing left. Life is over." This passage shows us clearly that he is the same in age as in youth. He is still mastered by the physical. Health of body and beauty of form dominate his imagination. If, as Ruskin believed, Nature meant to hide the anatomy of living creatures, and to cover up all that is repulsive, so that it exists only for the prurient who seek to expose that which she mercifully veils, Tolstoy dwells with morbid

pertinacity on a day when nothing will remain but putrefaction and worms.

Merejkowski, again, refuses to treat as insignificant certain flaws which come to light in the reminiscences of his amiable and appreciative biographer and brother-in-law, Bers, who refutes the charge of suppressing "all things not to the credit of Leo," but who assures us that "there is nothing that needed hiding from strangers." He makes it abundantly evident that Tolstoy's theories of life were not, when he wrote, shared by his wife, and that Leo behaved towards her with a touch of "exactness, reproachfulness, and even displeasure, accusing her of preventing him giving away his property, and going on bringing up the children in the old way. His wife for her part thinks herself in the right, and complains of such conduct on her husband's part." The Countess takes what would be generally considered a "practical" view of things, and would not willingly see the family inheritance go to strangers. I may interpose the observation that Bers here reflects the state of feeling that prevailed in the household at the critical period of Tolstoy's "conversion," and it is right to add that if this record places Tolstoy in a somewhat sorry light, and leaves in the reader the impression of strained relations between husband and wife, subsequent

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information leaves us in no doubt that their love prevailed. He himself lived the life he believed to be best, while leaving his family free to follow the beaten track. In thus permitting his wife to retain and administer the family property, in abiding by his wife's side, and continuing to enjoy the shelter of the ancestral roof, he has exposed himself to taunts which would have been yet more bitter and vindictive had he completed the renunciation which his theory of life required—had he doomed his wife and children to the life of poverty and toil which he deliberately chose for himself. "So, then, he has shifted the burden of the property he disdained and would not be cumbered with from his shoulders to hers. So, then, in order to keep the property, his wife has to seek from the authorities power to manage his estate. He ought to have renounced all, and he did not." Such is Merejkowski's trenchant summary of the situation. I must leave my readers to judge. For myself, I see nothing but a reflection of the obvious fact that a man is master of *his own life*, that is, of his personal attitude to his environment ; but he cannot alter that environment, neither can he think and will and act for others. Truly we realise the irony of Fate in the fact that the despised and rejected patrimony has grown in value from that day to this, and whereas his contemporary Dostoyevsky, born to

poverty, made money, lavished it recklessly, and lost it all; the Count, born to rank and fortune, has found it impossible to get rid of them, and in spite of himself money has gone on accumulating in his wife's hands. This he unavailingly deploras. One most improbable event would indeed bring him peace of mind and heart. If only the Government would tax his land beyond his means ! " My land here," he said to Mr. Henry Norman, " is worth to me, let us say, six roubles an acre a year. I would have the Government impose upon this land a tax of nine roubles. I could not pay it. Very well, let them take it away from me and give it in cultivation to peasant families in small quantities sufficient to support them." Fate has exposed him to Merejkowski's relentlessly cruel sarcasm : " He carried out the word of the Lord, and left house and wife and children, except in so far as he still clings to them." The gossiping Anna Seyron says : "*He tries to shut his eyes*, and is wholly absorbed in carrying out the programme of his life. He does not wish to see money, and as far as possible avoids taking it in his hands."

The problem is one which only the man himself can solve, but the fact that he lives in the midst, if not in the enjoyment of generally coveted luxuries, lends colour to the picture of him presented in the

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pages of Maxwell Gray's novel, *The Great Refusal*. With powerful rhetorical exaggeration Tolstoy is declared to be "materialism embodied." "He is the young man of the Gospel who made the great refusal; he has actually heard and echoed through the world the command: 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor,' and has not gone away grieved, but trafficked with his own conscience and lied to his own soul. Tolstoy? who has shifted the burden of his riches to the weaker shoulders of his wife, and fares delicately and lives at ease in his comfortable house at her side? Tolstoy? the splendid genius, the warm-hearted man, the new Christian? Oh! the house that holds Tolstoy is the saddest spot in Europe." This hysterical passage and the parade of a narrow form of Anglicanism mars what is otherwise a good story.

This man, so severely censured, is the last in the world to say, "Judge me by my words and not by my works." He knows that it is only by the life he lives that a man can justify himself and his religion. "There is," he thinks, "only one means of serving men, and it consists in oneself living a good life." The sorrow of his soul, from which he never escapes, is not that his task is so stern, but that he has fulfilled it so imperfectly. No man living, feels so keenly the difficulty of a rich man in seeking to



enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It was a great, heroic, entire renunciation that his faith in the Gospels bade him contemplate. His heart was hungry for sacrifice, and in this "the house that holds him" is sad, because he lives in perpetual regret. He wished to follow Him "who had not where to lay His head," and he has not been able to do it. Why has he not replied to Merejkowski? Why has he not defended himself against the charge of an incomplete surrender to the claims of Truth? He was quick to convict the Holy Synod of injustice in its edict of excommunication. How is it that he sits still under the lash of this pitiless indictment? Had he been the man his detractors depict, with what powerful sentences he would have vindicated himself. But his heart is full of sorrow, the sorrow of his own failure. His sacrifice has been great, and he could have compelled his critics to confess it, but to him it has been less than nothing, because he has fallen so far short of his ideal. "I am guilty and blameworthy and contemptible because I do not fulfil 'the Christian precepts.' My heart is breaking with despair because we have all lost the road; and while I struggle with all my strength to find it and keep in it, you, instead of pitying me when I go astray, cry triumphantly, 'See! he is in the swamp with us.'"

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It is only when, with Tolstoy, instead of rebutting the evidence of his imperfect renunciation, we accept it, that we come to know how great this man is. Then it dawns upon us that his sorrow is not because his heart was unprepared, but because he found no means whereby he might "live the life," and be the man he wished to be. Life has defrauded him of his meed of hardness as a soldier of the Kingdom of God, for in truth he has something of the early Christian's passion for the fire. "How is it," asked one, "that the government has never arrested or banished you?" "I cannot tell," he answered, and then, after a moment's pause, he added slowly, in a tone of much solemnity: "I wish they would. It would be a great joy to me." It is true of him as of lesser men, that he cannot undo the bonds by which he bound himself in earlier life. We make our past, and it is not less true that our past makes us. He bound himself by marriage. Do his censors who taunt him with asking others to make sacrifices which he is not prepared to make himself think that he should have literally forsaken his wife in order to escape the hated bondage of his wealth? This was the one sacrifice which it was equally against his nature and his avowed principles to make. Unless he could win her to an acceptance of those principles, and he could not, there was but one way open, the

way that he has taken, the way that is so much harder to him than that complete abandonment of property which he desired to make, would have been.

Thus far we have asked not whether his actual life is in fact beautiful and noble, and inspired by the spirit of Christ's teaching, but whether he regards it as good. To many of us it is a much grander portrayal of that spirit than any literal abandonment of wife and children and home would have been. The world, we think, would have gained nothing and would have lost much had Tolstoy been permitted to strip himself of all things and become a peasant, dependent on farm labour for his bread. Some of us are far from thinking meanly of the Countess because she refused to yield to his wishes in this, nor can we regard her inability to see with her husband on this one point the evidence of inferior character or capacity. Of the gifts of civilisation it is easy to say: "Deny them." It is harder, and yet holier, to use them with wisdom and thrift as stewards of God's Kingdom. Neither is it true that her sympathy with the Count in his great life-work is imperfect. Her pathetic and impassioned protest against her husband's excommunication should suffice to vindicate forever not only the depth of her love, but the breadth of her Christain faith and her reverence for him. "My

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indignation and grief," she said, "are immense. Not that my husband's spiritual death is entailed by that document. This is God's affair, not man's. From the religious standpoint the life of the soul remains an impenetrable mystery for each of us, and that life, thank Heaven, is dependent on no earthly power. But when I see this excommunication pronounced by the Church to which I belong, and shall never cease to belong, which Christ has established in order that in Christ's name it should consecrate all the most solemn acts of man's life—birth, marriage, death—whose mission is to proclaim the law of charity, the law of pardon, the love of our enemies, and of those who hate us, and whose prayers are due to all, I am at a loss what to think. That excommunication will excite not the adhesion but the indignation of men, and will earn for Leo Tolstoy increased love and sympathy."

The conclusion to which I believe the world will come is not that he has shrunk from the tremendous sacrifices entailed by his principles, but that on the other hand he has yielded to the temptation to magnify the sacredness and use of suffering. He ought, we think, to realise with the rest of the world, that in the life of spiritual toil which has been his for so many years, and by the example he has set of severe and even austere simplicity and

self-denial in the use of the good things of life, in an age of impoverished ideals and swollen pride, he has best fulfilled his calling as a sincere and faithful follower of the precepts of the Gospel.

It simply remains for us to make a parting visit to that beautiful home of his, to see him in his actual surroundings to-day, by the help of some who have loved him most and have been privileged to breathe its pure atmosphere of love, and to enjoy its gracious hospitality.



## CHAPTER XVI.

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### **Tolstoy at Home.**

**I**T is with a grateful sense of relief that we turn from the harsh and biting atmosphere of critical controversy to take a glance at the home life of the man who has won so much love and excited so much hostility. The light of true religion burns brightest at the centre. That inner flame of faith will surely give light to all that are in the house. His Moscow home need not detain us long, for there he has always lived unwillingly, but the fact remains that he has a town house, not indeed magnificent, less than a mansion, but a home "full of hospitality to the brim ; its windows shedding a rich light by night on the frost-bespangled trees of the old garden, with an atmosphere of warmth and gaiety within, and a certain high-born simplicity." Early in the eighties the house was rebuilt, but while the other apartments were reconstructed in accordance with new ideas, the Count's study remained bare and unadorned as before. When the Countess proposed improvements he reminded her that many of the world's most useful workers had lived and worked well in incomparably

worse surroundings. Still, as Merejkowski observes, it is a room well adapted to peaceful work. There are no distracting superfluities, but good light, good ventilation, and good books ; indeed this noiseless retreat, with its pleasant outlook on the garden and remoteness from the living rooms, is really an ideal workroom. It is there the Count does his hard day's work when spending the winter in Moscow, but our present concern is rather with his loved country house, some ten miles from Tula, the Russian Birmingham. As things go in Russia, the intervening country affords pleasant and goodly prospects, good roads, good bridges, good tillage and crops. The last mile of the journey has to be made over rough tracks and through grass fields, until at length the droshky turns into the gateway of Yasnaya Polyana. An avenue of old birches leads past the lake and within sight of the old white house, with its iron roof painted green, and closely surrounded with trees. The study at Yasnaya is described as being even more delightful than that at Moscow, "amid the hush of the old park with its avenues of immemorial birches and limes, in the noble and patriarchal retreat, one of the most charming nooks in Central Russia." Here are not only books, but, as this is the Count's summer abode, the implements of his "bread labour" are scattered



*TOLSTOY IN HIS STUDY.*



about—the scythe, the saw, and the file. It is in this room that we feel the touch of a refined, if severe, simplicity which, scorning American luxury, is indicative of the truest culture.

We know how disturbing the amenities of such an abode are to those who associate the name of Tolstoy with a hermit-like austerity of life. It serves our purpose better to inquire into the impression produced by such a scene on an entirely unprejudiced mind, by a cultured man of the world, unmoved by fear of Socialism on the one hand, and destitute of the superstitious veneration of the Tolstoyan on the other. “Here he comes,” says Henry Norman, “walking sturdily down the narrow woodway, his dog leaping joyously about him. Count Tolstoy’s face is as familiar as that of any crowned ruler of to-day. Everybody knows of his simple habits, his peasant’s blouse, his avoidance of meat, wine, and tobacco. But his appearance makes an impression no whit less keen because it is exactly what you have long known. . . . He wears a round soft felt cap and a black blouse with a strap at the waist, and his shoes are in a strange state of dilapidation for the feet of a man who, by birth a nobleman, has become by conviction a shoemaker.”

Visitors are, it is right to add, variously impressed



by his personal appearance. Superficially regarded he is a peasant, because he dons a peasant's blouse; but to one who looks deeper, the Count is every inch a gentleman, and by an irony of fate the bearing of this lover and apostle of peace reminds of the old soldier and the *Grand Seigneur*. Hugo Ganz, a most capable as well as unprejudiced observer, assures us that there is a most obvious distinction between the rough, torn, dirty, and ill-fitting smock of the *mujik* and Tolstoy's well-fitting coat. Leo Tolstoy certainly has good taste.

If, again, we have assumed from a certain uncouthness and primitive simplicity in his later literary style that he is uncouth and forbidding in manner, it is an impression to be got rid of once for all. Ganz speaks of "the infinite friendliness of his eyes, the gentleness of his hand-shake." It was Henry Norman who, speaking of a photograph, added: "But the lens cannot portray the infinite sweetness of his expression, nor the pen convey the exceeding gentleness of his words."

Nothing is more impressive to visitors than the aged prophet's splendid industry. It happens not infrequently that the visitor arrives early, at breakfast-time, only to find that his host has already been astir and that his day is already mapped out. He works regularly in his room till one o'clock, and even

then luncheon is more often than not served for him in his own room, that he may continue his morning's work uninterrupted, but at a certain time work is put aside to allow of his invariable two hours' ride. Even the intense frost of the Russian winter is not permitted to interfere with it, for Tolstoy in early manhood was an intrepid sportsman, knowing neither fear nor fatigue, and has never relinquished his passion for horses and horse exercise. On one of the last days of last year (1907) his horse stumbled, and he was violently thrown to the ground, and it was feared that the shock might prove fatal, but his marvellous constitution triumphed once again. The next we heard of him was that he was back at work again, devising a new and simpler way of teaching children to read. Leo Tolstoy is still a giant intellectually. His physical strength was once scarcely less remarkable, and it has been remarked that the two characters under guise of whom he has pictured himself, Peter in *War and Peace* and Levine in *Anna Karenina*, were both men of exceptional vitality. Nevertheless, years tell, and the old man needs the loving care which his wife and his daughter, Countess Alexander Lvovna — Sasha, as she is familiarly called—lavish upon him.

How kind Providence has been to him, in spite of his courting of hardship! How few fathers are as

happily placed after a long experience of life as he—cared for by a loving wife and daughter, respected by his neighbours, enjoying the advantages and attractions of the house in which he was born, and a life of peaceful retirement from the world, invaded only by occasional visits of admiring friends and disciples.

The visitors' opportunity comes with the evening hour. From the moment the family assemble at dinner he gives himself wholly to his guests. Far less a man of society, and less disposed to defer to its conventions, he yet in many respects produces on the new-comer the kind of impression which Robert Browning made upon those who were introduced to him for the first time, who, expecting to meet a man every inch a poet, saw instead a very genial and vigorous gentleman of advanced years, distinguished from others, if at all, by the extraordinary extent of his knowledge, by the versatility of his wit, and the vivacity of his spirit.

And for the meal,—it is well served by a manservant, and is abundant, well-cooked and unpretentious. There is probably fish, roast meat with vegetables, and dessert, with coffee following, some form of tasty vegetarian dish being specially prepared for the Count, who has not touched meat for twenty years. There is neither in the Count himself nor in

any of the arrangements of his house any attempt at eccentricity, and it is obvious that they do not live on "locusts and wild honey," or on the modern equivalents of this primitive fare. At the same time he lets it be known that he would act differently and go further had he himself alone to consider. A visitor suggests that his protest against the art and science and luxuries of life was not to be taken too literally, but rather as counteracting other powerful influences. "No," replies the Count, "I believe in the absolute correctness of my demands." He on principle condemns any art, or any refinement, which can be enjoyed only by a restricted class. The selfishness involved in such exclusive enjoyment would, in his view, more than outweigh the pleasure or advantage received.

But what of the village in the midst of which the Tolstoys have so long lived? What have they done for the well-being and improvement of their peasant neighbours?

Mr. Hugo Ganz spent a memorable afternoon with the young Countess Sasha; who proposed a walk through the village, which was somewhat disappointing. Proximity to the great man had left it much as it had ever been. Apparently Tolstoy does not care to disturb his dear peasants even in their love of dirt! Neither does his daughter insist on the

duty or delight of cleanliness, or the advantage of reserving the living room for its human occupants. All the more did he admire the humanity of the young Countess when he saw her enter the damp and dirty hovels of the peasants and caress their ragged and filthy children. But why were they ragged and why were they filthy? We sometimes forget how far east is Russia, and that the close proximity of cleanliness to godliness is much less evident to the Russian—even to the Russian gentleman—than to ourselves. Tolstoy himself makes fun of the Englishman who is proud of using “an excessive quantity of soap, and of pouring great quantities of water over his body.”

What do they do, then, we may ask, to help the village if they do not clean it? They love the people and they teach the children, and in the latter work the young Countess takes the largest share. As regards the external decencies of life, Tolstoy's doctrine of non-intervention would prevent his doing more than setting them a good example, and if in the meantime the peasant prefers to be unwashed, as his fathers were before him, and to share his one room with four-footed companions, it is not for him to interfere. There you have Tolstoy, who, on the whole, greatly prefers the peasant, with his inveterate love of dirt and idleness, and must we not for truth's



sake add drink? to the useless culture and costly vice of the city. Even so, we who are mere Westerns can hardly help pressing the question, why the peasant should not learn some refinement such as is so apparent in the Count's own household, while we open our minds to learn lessons of patience, fortitude and cheerfulness from him?

The Russian labourer is never cleansed. The dirt is thick. It cakes upon him, yet Tolstoy is not shocked. Dirt is only unpleasant to him as the mire of the field or the road may be disagreeable, but which we must take as we find it.

The family not only educate the children, they have established a village hospital and dispensary which benefit not only the villagers, but their neighbours in the surrounding country. The doctor has often as many as forty patients in a single office hour.

Behind the mysterious incalculable new life of the Russian people, that palpable awakening from age-long sleep, lies the force of this prescient spirit. He, though to-day suffering from the fickleness of the people who idolised him yesterday and seem to have forgotten him already, is the awakener. We are too near him, and the ultimate issues of his life-work are too remote for us to venture to assign him his rank among the world's greatest thinkers and reformers. But

this we know, that he is one of them. We have learnt to speak of "the soul of a people," and the further eastward we journey, the more inscrutable do we find the inner and essential quality and character and consequent ideals, of this soul to be. It is not only that Tolstoy has made a titanic struggle to live an ideal life, but because he is a Russian, that we are baffled in our endeavour to do him justice, but whatever we recognise as noblest in the life and in the aspirations of the Russian people—their marvellous patience, their God-consciousness, their industry—are all incarnate in him. It is only gradually and as the movement of a great people towards intellectual and social and political freedom completes itself, that even Russia can realise how great her prophet is. Another figure in Russia arrests our gaze, and appeals to our sympathy even when we condemn his weakness—that of the present Autocrat, born to greatness, yet incapable of it. Slight and insignificant in figure, his pale face is redeemed from insipidity by some trace of mysticism and some suggestion of a soul troubled by the pain and sadness of human life, yet conscious of a deeper mystery enfolding it. Of all "mediums," whom Nicholas II. is said to have consulted, surely the greatest and wisest is Leo Tolstoy, who despises

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spiritualism. The Autocrat is the most impotent of nominal rulers, knowing all too well that the grand dukes would not suffer him to live many days should he dare to be in fact as well as in heart a father to his people. And what shall we say of the Prophet? It was but yesterday that the Government withdrew his portrait from the public gallery, afraid lest it should foster a dangerous cult. Day by day the people showered flowers before the portrait of the man they loved. To-day they forget him, but the movement towards peace and freedom and the brotherhood of man moves on, and yet how slowly!

Tolstoy is not gifted to be the leader and controller of organisations to carry into effect the great object for which he has lived. He has lived the life, and shown the way, and lifted up the voice.

Others, men of greater administrative sagacity, must carry on his work and apply the great principles which he has taught our age. Again I say, the man is even greater than his achievements. As we see him now it is hard for us to think of him as altogether such as we are! Age and toil, holiness and stress of spiritual purpose, have left their mark upon him. He is neither faultless nor infallible, but simply one of the greatest men who have ever lived, one who, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton says, besides being a magnificent novelist, is one of the very

few men alive who have a real, solid, and serious view of life, one of those who, utterly sincere, and purged of the dross of the world by a life of sacrifice, has become a true saint, one on whom the divine light manifestly rests, yet human to the red-ripe of his heart, keenest of living seers, least tolerant of weakness in himself, most gentle and forbearing in his thoughts and judgment of others.

For the moment his countrymen neglect him, but he cannot be forgotten, nor can his memory die, or his life-work cease to bear fruit. If we find something of sadness in the thought that he has outlived his popularity, we remember that it was not for fame or favour that he lived, but to look truth in the face, and to do the will of God; and as we take our last look at him in the study at Yasnaya Polyana, we see in him the highest type and example of unconscious saintliness. He lives for the world, but he is not of it. He asks so little—a room in which to work and a little rice and fruit, with water from the well to drink. He takes from us as little as he can for himself, but he gives his life, the strenuous labour of his body, of his brain, and of his heart, to leave the world richer and purer than he found it.

THE END.

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